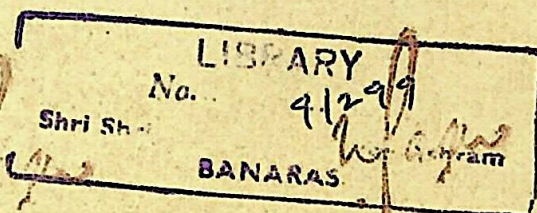


LETTERS
PRESENTED
FROM

9/299
SRI RAMANASRAMAM



PRESENTED

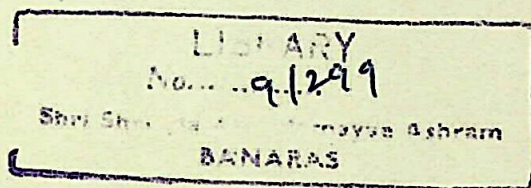
SRI RAMANASRAMAM
TIRUVANNAMALAI :: S. INDIA

6
4
18

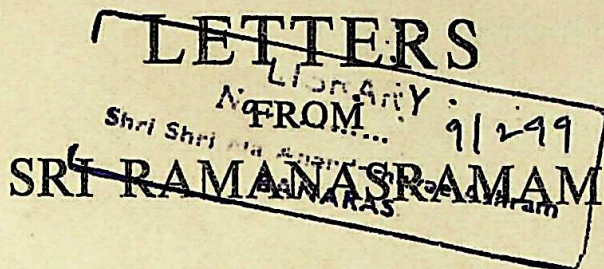
27

PRESENTED

W. J. ...







SURI NAGAMMA

Translated from
"Ramanasrama Lekhalu"
(Telugu)
By D. S. SASTRI

PRESENTED



First Edition

Published by
T. N. VENKATARAMAN
MANAGER-PRESIDENT
SRI RAMANASRAMAM P.O.
TIRUVANNAMALAI
S. INDIA
1962

© Sri Ramanasramam, 1962.

Price : Rs. 4.00

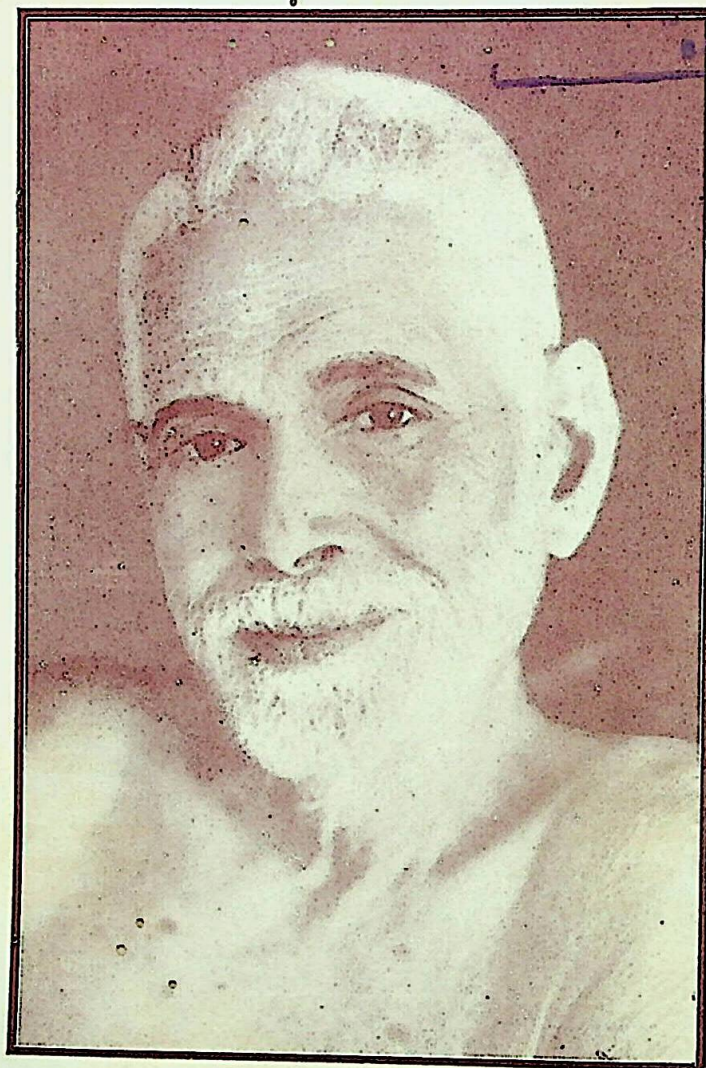
Postage Extra

The Jupiter Press Private Ltd., Madras-18.

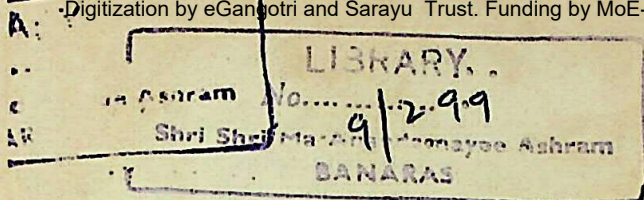
PRESENTED

LIBR

No.....



BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI



INTRODUCTION

SRI RAMANASRAMAM is an unique institution. Its inmates are not given specific instructions as to what they should do or should not do ; they are left to fend for themselves and to absorb whatever they can from the calm and peaceful atmosphere of the Asramam.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi preached silence by observing it himself. At sunrise and at sunset every day, Vedic hymns were recited in his presence ending with "*Nakarmanā Naprajaya Dhanena Thyāgenaike Amrutatva-mānasuh*", which means that *moksha* (deliverance) is attained, not by *karma* or *praja* or *dhana*, but by renouncing every one of them. Asramites aspiring for spiritual advancement were thus taught to learn and practise self-enquiry and renunciation. They sat in silence at the holy feet of Bhagavan, imbibing the lessons of silence. Bhagavan spoke occasionally to the Asramites and also to casual visitors on spiritual matters. On such occasions, a few devotees recorded whatever he spoke ; and amongst them, Nagamma was one.

Nagamma had no school education worth mention and does not know any language other than her mother tongue, Telugu. During her early years, owing to domestic calamities and consequent enforced solitude, she studied books of ancient lore and thereby acquired some literary knowledge which resulted in her writing a few books in prose and poetry. When, however, she became an Asramite, she renounced everything including her literary activities. Sitting at the feet of the Master, day in and day

out, she felt an irresistible urge in her to record the discussions devotees were having with Bhagavan and as she began recording them found that that work was a sort of *sādhana* for herself and so began writing them in the shape of letters to her brother in Madras. About 300 letters were thus written. Amongst them, the Asramam published the first 75 letters during the lifetime of Bhagavan and the next 60 letters subsequently. The former were read out in Bhagavan's presence, when they were published in the form of a book ('*Sri Ramanasrama Lekhalu*' in Telugu).

I read these letters over and over again on different occasions but never did I realise the depth of wisdom and knowledge contained in the cryptic sayings of Bhagavan until I had to sit up and translate them. I have also found throughout the letters the great trials and tribulations Nagamma had undergone in trying to live up to the high ideals of the Asramam. The letters are a veritable mine of information presented in a simple and easily understandable manner and are well worth a careful study not only by the spiritual aspirant but also by the lay reader.

Some years back, at the suggestion of Mr. Arthur Osborne, an Asramite, and with his active help, I began translating these letters into English but could not complete the work for want of time. When recently, the Asramam Manager-President urged me to finish the work, I did so and am glad they are now being published.

"RAMANA NILAYAM",
10, Vijayaraghavachari Road,
T. Nagar, Madras-17.
1st June, 1962.

D. S. SASTRI.

9/299

CONTENTS

PART I

	PAGE
1. The Son is Beholden to the Father ..	1
2. <i>Aham Sphurana</i>	2
3. Quarrel between Uma and Mahēswara ..	4
4. Marriages	6
5. On to Skandāsramam ..	7
6. In Service of the Sage ..	8
7. The <i>Nikshēpam</i> (Treasure) ..	13
8. Service of <i>Ātma Swarūpa</i> is <i>Ātma Sevā</i> ..	14
9. <i>Samatvam</i> (Equality with all) ..	16
10. Worldly Troubles	18
11. What is meant by <i>Samsāra</i> ? ..	19
12. "Go the Way you Came". ..	21
13. <i>Ahetuka Bhakthi</i> (Motiveless Devotion) ..	23
14. Conventional Respect	24
15. Echamma's Demise	27
16. The First <i>Bhiksha</i>	30
17. How do you know that you do not know anything?	32
18. Leopards and Snakes	33
19. Won't you please hear my Speechless Appeal? ..	35
20. A Squirrel	36
21. <i>Dharma</i> is different from <i>Dharma-Sūkshma</i> ..	38
22. <i>Moksha</i>	40
23. Worship of the cow	41
24. A pair of pigeons	44

	PAGE
25. Baby cheetahs	46
26. Medication without treatment	49
27. <i>Bhakti's</i> taste	51
28. <i>Brahmāstram</i> (Divine Weapon)	52
29. That is Play, this is Verse	54
30. Anger	56
31. Decorations to Amba	58
32. Avvaiyār's Song	59
33. Astral Paths — Higher Worlds	61
34. Books	62
35. Disease	64
36. <i>Kowpīnavantah Khalu Bhāgyavantah</i> (Fortunate are those with a mere loin-cloth)	66
37. <i>Moksha</i> with the body	68
38. <i>Chiranjeevis</i> (Immortal Beings)	69
39. <i>Umā</i>	70
40. <i>Asthi</i> , <i>Bhāthi</i> and <i>Priyam</i> (Existence, Consciousness and Bliss)	72
41. The true nature of <i>Pradakshina</i>	73
42. <i>Abhayam sarva Bhūthēbhyaha</i> (Compassion towards all)	77
43. That which <i>Is</i> , is only <i>One</i>	79
44. The black cow	81
45. <i>Parātpara Rūpam</i> (The Supreme Being)	82
46. The Ethics of Social Existence	83
47. Which is the Vehicle?	84
48. <i>Japa</i> , <i>Tapa</i> and the like	86
49. What is <i>Samādhi</i> ?	88
50. What is <i>Sarvam</i> (Everything)? (How to see everything as one's Self?)	89
51. Death of Madhavaswamy	91

52. "Anōraṇēeyam Mahatōmaheeyām" (An Atom among Atoms and a Giant among Giants)	93
53. Dreams : Delusions	95
54. Pure <i>Bhakthi</i> (Devotion) is Real Service ..	97
55. <i>Guri</i> (Concentration) alone is the <i>Guru</i> (The Preceptor)	99
56. <i>Siddhās</i> (People with Superhuman Powers) ..	100
57. <i>Karthurāgnayā Prāpyathē Phalam</i> (Fruits of Actions are ordained by the Creator) ..	102
58. <i>Sarva Samatvam</i> (Universal Equality) ..	104
59. <i>Yathēchha</i> (as one desires)	106
60. Programme	107
61. An Unknown Devotee	108
62. <i>Ekam Aksharam</i> (One Letter — The One Imperishable)	110
63. Contentment	112
64. <i>Ātma Pradakshina</i> (Going round the Self) ..	114
65. <i>Narakāsūra — Dipāvali</i>	116
66. Feast and Fun	118
67. <i>Arpana</i> (Offering)	119
68. <i>Sādhana-Sākshātkāram</i> (The Way and the Goal)	122
69. Brahman is Real : The World is an Illusion ..	124
70. <i>Swāmi</i> is Everywhere	125
71. <i>Akshara Swarūpam</i> (The Imperishable Spirit)	131
72. <i>Upadēsa Sāram — Unnadhi Nalubadhi</i> • ..	134
73. The One Known as 'I' is the Mind itself •	137
74. The Golden Jubilee Festivities .. •	139
75. The Golden Jubilee Celebrations ..	145

PART II

	PAGE
1. <i>Brahmotsavam</i>	149
2. <i>Ātmākāravṛtti</i> (The Soul, its shape and action)	153
3. <i>Āndavanē</i>	155
4. <i>Omkāram — Aksharam</i>	158
5. Anecdotes regarding life at Virupāksha Cave	159
6. <i>Siva Bhaktha</i> Sundaramurthy	162
7. Sundaramurthy's bond of servitude	165
8. Nature	171
9. Who is Ramana ?	174
10. <i>Drāvida Sisulu</i>	176
11. <i>Jnāna Sambandamurthy</i>	179
12. Divine Force	184
13. Sleep and the Real State	186
14. The Incarnation of Sri Dakshināmūrthy	188
15. The <i>Jnāni's</i> Mind is <i>Brahman</i> Itself	192
16. <i>Māyā</i> (Illusion)	195
17. <i>Aadarana</i> (Regard)	197
18. <i>Sādhana</i> in the Presence of the Guru	199
19. <i>Hridayam — Sahasrāram</i>	202
20. Telugu <i>Venba</i>	203
21. <i>Ekātma Panchakam</i>	206
22. Birth	208
23. <i>Sefi (Ātman)</i>	210
24. <i>Guru Swarūpam</i> (The Guru's Form)	212
25. No Waste	216
26. Delusion and Peace of Mind	219
27. Mother Alagamma	221

	PAGE
28. Human Effort	226
29. Headship of a Mutt	227
30. Regulating Sleep, Diet and Movements	230
31. Devotion without irregularity	233
32. Blessings	235
33. A Bouquet of Precepts	237
34. Absolute Surrender	240
35. Dream Visions	243
36. Divine Visions	246
37. The White Peacock	248
38. Which is the foot and which is the head?	250
39. Suicide	252
40. The <i>Shakthi</i> that is, is One	255
41. <i>Prārabdha</i> (Fate)	256
42. Seeing a lion in a dream	260
43. Where is the king and where is the kingdom?	263
44. <i>Nididhyāsana</i> (Intense concentration)	265
45. <i>Ajapa Tatvam</i> (The meaning of involuntary japam)	268
46. Why any secrecy?	269
47. <i>Kṛiti Samarpana</i> —Dedication of a book	273
48. <i>Karathala Bhiksha</i> (Alms in the palms)	276
49. <i>Upanayanam</i> (Ceremony of the Sacred Thread)	279
50. Forced Dinners	282
51. Questions with half knowledge	286
52. <i>Pūja</i> with flowers	288
53. <i>Abhishekam</i> (Worship with Water)	290
54. <i>Tīrtha-Prasādās</i> (Holy Water and Food)	293
55. <i>Haṣṭha Masthaka Samyogam</i> (Touching of the head with the hand by way of Blessing)	296

x

	PAGE
56. <i>Vichāramanimālā</i>	298
57. Residents in Foreign Countries ..	300
58. <i>Akshayalokam</i> (The Eternal World) ..	303
59. <i>Jnānadrishṭi</i> (Supernatural Vision) ..	304
60. Hearing, Meditation and the like ..	307

PRESENTED

LETTERS FROM SRI RAMANASRAMAM

PART I

LETTERS FROM SRI RAMANASRAMAM

(Translated from Telugu)

21st November 1945

(1) THE SON IS BEHOLDEN TO THE FATHER

Brother, you have asked me to write to you from time to time whatever striking happens in Sri Bhagavan's presence and what Sri Bhagavan says on such occasions. But am I capable of doing so? Anyway I will make an attempt and am beginning this very day. The attempt will succeed only if Bhagavan's Grace is on it.

The day before yesterday being full moon, the usual *Deepotsava* (festival of lights) was celebrated on a grand scale. This morning Sri Arunachaleswarar started for *giri pradakshina* (going round the hill) with the usual retinue and devotees and accompaniment of music. By the time the procession reached the Asramam Gate, Sri Niranjananda Swami (the *Sarvādhikāri*) came out with Asramam devotees, offered coconuts and camphor to Sri Arunachaleswarar, and paid homage when the procession was stopped and the priests performed *Ārati* (waving of the lights) to the God. Just then Sri Bhagavan happened to be going towards the *Goshala* (cowshed) and seeing the grandeur he sat down on the pial near the tap by the side of the book depot. The *Ārati* plate offered to Arunachaleswarar was brought to Bhagavan by Asramam devotees and Sri Bhagavan took a little *Vibhuti* (holy ashes) and applied it to his forehead, saying in an undertone "*Appākku Pillai*

Adakkam” (The son is beholden to the father). His voice seemed choked with emotion as he spoke. The expression on his face proved the ancient saying “*bhakti poornathaya Jnānam*” (the culmination of Devotion is Knowledge). Sri Bhagavan is Lord Siva’s son. Sri Ganapati Muni’s saying, that he is Skanda incarnate, was confirmed. It struck us that Bhāgavan was teaching us that since all creatures are the children of *Ishwara*, even a *jnāni* should be beholden to *Ishwara*.

We can never tell how pregnant with meaning are the words of Mahātmās. You ask me to write somehow, but how can I convey the exquisite beauty of his utterances? How can I describe adequately? I wrote in a recent poem that every word that falls from his lips is scripture. Why talk of his words alone? If one has the ability to understand his very gaze and gait, his action and inaction, inhaling and exhaling — everything about him is full of meaning. Have I the capacity to understand and interpret all this? With full faith in Sri Bhagavan’s grace, I shall write to you whatever occurs to me, serving Sri Bhagavan with the devotion of the squirrel to Sri Rama.

With regards,

SISTER

22nd November 1945

(2) AHAM SPHURANA

Yesterday a Bengali Swami in ochre robes by name Hrishikesanand came here. This morning from 8-30 to 11-00 Bhagavan continuously discussed spiritual matters

PRESENTED

Sri Ramanasramam

9/12/99

3

with him. That voice flowed full of nectar and uninterruptedly like the waters of the Ganges. How can my pen keep pace with that great flow? That *amrit* can only be drunk deep with the hand of devotion, how can it be gathered and conveyed on paper? When Sri Bhagavan was relating his experiences in Madurai of the vision of death, these eyes were incapable of taking in the radiance of his personality, these ears of grasping the full wisdom of his words. It is natural for the enthusiasm of one who relates an incident to reflect the level of intelligence of him who listens. I should have given you a more detailed account of the questions asked by the Swami and the replies given by Bhagavan; only at present the place reserved for ladies in the hall is rather far from Bhagavan, and, as I happened to be sitting at the back, I could not hear properly all that was being discussed. I did however hear one thing clearly. Bhagavan said, "In the vision of death, though all the senses were benumbed, the *aham sphurana* (Self-awareness) was clearly evident, and so I realised that it was that *awareness* that we call 'I', and not the body. This Self-awareness never decays. It is unrelated to anything. It is Self-luminous. Even if this body is burnt, it will not be affected. Hence, I realised on that very day so clearly that *that* was 'I'."

Many more such things were said but I could not follow or remember them; and so I am not able to write any more about them. There have been several discussions as this before. I am only sorry I have let slip such innumerable gems. Please excuse my laziness and indifference in not writing you even though you have been asking me to write all these days.

23rd November 1945

(3) QUARREL BETWEEN UMA AND
MAHĒSWARA

This afternoon, while Viswanath was sitting near Bhagavan along with other devotees, Bhagavan was somehow reminded of an old widow and began to speak about her as follows :— (I afterwards learnt that she is the younger sister of Muttu Krishna Bhāgavathar who received Sri Bhagavan with kindness and gave him food at Kilu Agraharam). “That good lady not only gave me a hearty meal, but also, with a loving heart, gave me a parcel of sweetmeats offered as *naivedya* to the household God, saying, ‘My dear boy, keep this with you carefully and eat the sweetmeats on the way.’ She came to see me twice while I was in Virupāksha cave and used to say, ‘My dear boy, look what a state you are in! Your body is golden and you do not even wrap a cloth round it.’ When he spoke in this strain about her motherly affection, I could see that Bhagavan was overflowing with love. His voice was choked with emotion. That sight reminded me of the saying that the heart of a *Jnāni* is as soft as butter, and once more of the old saying “*premapoornathaya Jnānam*” (The culmination of Devotion is Knowledge).

Sometime back, while reading that portion in Arunāchalapurāna where Gautama was extolling Amba, Bhagavan's eyes were flooded with tears, his voice faltered and he put the book aside and sank into silence. Whenever any incident full of love takes place, or whenever passages saturated with *bhakti* are read, we often see Bhagavan thus overwhelmed with emotion. As one goes on observing, one

gets confirmed in the view that *prema* and *bhakti* are merely different aspects of *Jnāna*.

About a week ago, a story appeared in the magazine "Hindu Sundari" under the heading "*paachikalu*" (dice). It seems it is out of the Skanda Purāna. Once, even Pārvati and Paramēswara succumbed to the quarrel-mongering of Nārada. "Lakshmi and Vishnu play dice, so why not you?" said Nārada, and egged them on to play. Pārvati was enthusiastic over the idea and persuaded Siva to play dice with her. In the game, Siva lost and Pārvati was puffed up with pride and spoke slightly of him. That is the legend.

After reading it, Bhagavan, his heart full of *bhakti*, asked me, "Have you read this story?" When I said, "Yes, Bhagavan," he said with a voice choked with feeling, "The holy festival which is annually performed here on Sankrānti day, deals mainly with this quarrel between Uma and Mahēswara."

You know, every year, the divine marriage festival is celebrated here and during those days, if anybody were to speak about the festival in Sri Bhagavan's presence, Bhagavan would usually remark with great feeling, "This is the marriage festival of Father and Mother." You know the lives of Mahātmās are full of peculiar incidents; they express in their faces whatever *rasa* is appropriate to the occasion. But what can one say in the presence of the all pervading *vijnana rasa* which integrates all the other *rasās*?

24th November 1945

(4) MARRIAGES

Yesterday I wrote to you about Bhagavan talking sometimes of the marriage festival of "Father and Mother." Not only that, but whenever devotees bring newly wedded couples in their family to pay homage at the lotus feet of Sri Bhagavan, he blesses them with his wonted gracious smile ; he listens with interest to all the various incidents of the marriage. If you observe Bhagavan's face on such occasions, you can see the same amusement which our elders used to show when they witnessed the dolls' marriages that we performed in our childhood days.

Prabhavati got married not long ago. It must have been about a year back. For about two years before her marriage she was staying here. She is a girl from Maharashtra, good-looking and cultured. She wanted to be a great *bhakta* like Saint Meerabai and so used to sing and dance and say that she would never marry, and she would don ochre garments and behave like a naughty child before Sri Bhagavan. Bhagavan knew that her naughtiness would not leave her until she married. At last somehow she did get married. Immediately after that the bride and bridegroom came in their wedding attire with their relatives and offerings of fruits and flowers and bowed down before Bhagavan.

After a stay of two or three days she came one morning at 8 o'clock with her husband seeking Bhagavan's blessings before leaving to set up home in her husband's place. Squirrels were playing about Bhagavan's sofa and peacocks were wandering outside the hall. There were not many people ; it was calm and quiet in the hall ; the young

man bowed down to Bhagavan with awe and respect, took leave of him and stood waiting at the side of the doorway. With downcast looks and bubbling shyness and tearful eyes, the beloved child of the Asramam, while waiting there for Bhagavan's permission, looked like Shakuntala trying to tear herself away from the Kanva Asramam. Bhagavan nodded his head in token of permission, and then she bowed down to him. No sooner had she crossed the threshold than Bhagavan remarked, looking at me, "It was only yesterday, she had the chapter of Krishnāvātār in Bhagavata copied out by Sundaresa Iyer." I said with delight, "When next she comes here, she will come with a child in her arms." Meanwhile she began to sing a full-throated song full of devotion with voice as sweet as a Kokila while going round the hall in *pradakshina*. Bhagavan was evidently moved and like Kanva Rishi himself he said, "Do you hear the hymn from *Mukundamala*?" My eyes were filled with tears.

I went out and gave her my blessings while she again and again prostrated herself to Bhagavan; then I saw her out of the Asramam and returned to the hall. I do not know if you will consider this an exaggeration, but I may tell you that the stories we have read in the *Purānas* are being re-enacted here and now before our very eyes.

25th November 1945

(5) ON TO SKANDĀSRAMAM

Tomorrow is the auspicious day fixed for Bhagavan to go to Skandāsrāmam with devotees and hold a feast there. All the brother and sister devotees residing in and

around the Asramam were busy the whole day making a fuss about arrangements for the trip. Bhagavan was however sitting as usual, dignified, calm and unconcerned. If all ask him to go, he may do so ; if they say no, he will stay away. Is there anything for him to pack up or worry about ? The *kamandalu* (water bowl), the *karra* (walking stick), the *kaupēefia* (loin-cloth) and the towel over him are all the things about him. The moment he thinks of it he could get ready to start. Sankarāchārya has described only such sages as "*kaupēenavantah khalu bhāgyavantah*" (he who wears a loin-cloth is verily the richest). This Asramam, this programme, these devotees and this paraphernalia are all like a drama enacted on the stage for the benefit of others but does Bhagavan really need them all ? Out of his abundant mercy he is in our midst, thus bound down, but by a mere wish, could he not go away freely crossing the seven seas ? Remember ; his staying with us is our special good luck. I shall write to you again tomorrow's happenings.

26th November 1945

(6) IN SERVICE OF THE SAGE

When I went to the Asramam for the early morning *Veda-pārāyana* everyone was terribly busy. The kitchen presented a picturesque appearance, some cooking, some cleaning, some giving orders, everyone busy with one thing or another. *Pulihodara*, *dadhyodhanam*, *pongal*, *vadai*, chips, *poories* and *koottu* and ever so many eatables were filled into baskets and sent up the hill. The *Sarvādhikāri*

does not appear to have had a wink of sleep the whole night. He is the person who has taken all the trouble.

Lord Krishna is reported to have stopped the celebration of the annual Indra Yajnam performed by the shepherds and instead arranged for the worship of the Govardhana Giri itself. When you saw the series of baskets going up the hill it appeared as if Sri Rāmana had arranged this worship of Arunachala in place of the *vana samārādhana* of the Amala Tree (garden festival) performed annually during the month of Kārthika.

After *Veda-pārāyana*, Bhagavan had his bath and breakfast and started for Skandāsramam accompanied by Rangaswami who is like Nandi to Lord Siva, with the rays of the sun lined up on either side. Leading the way, Bhagavan went up the hill to Skandāsramam as if he was going to his own home.

Without giving the least inconvenience to Bhagavan the devotees proceeded in several groups and reached Skandāsramam. Aunt Alamelu (sister of Bhagavan) and myself followed. Some other women got to the destination a little late. Being surrounded by the devotees Bhagavan was seated comfortably under the pleasant shade of the trees just in front of the Skandāsramam building. This showed what a *Rishiāsramam* is generally like. This Asramam was just like Badarikāsramam of old as described in *Harivamsam* though the latter could not now be witnessed direct. This Skandāsramam like Badarikāsramam provided a visual feast with its water coming out of the rocky fountains resembling the *Sandhyarghya jalam* (the oblations at dawn and dusk) of Samyameswara and warblings and melodious notes of the birds sounding like the musical hymns of Sāma Veda as sung by *rishikumārās* (the

sons of seers). Apart from the many *sādhakās* and *san-yāsins* present, lawyers and doctors, engineers and artists, newspaper correspondents and poets, songsters and a good many others arrived from Madras, Pondicherry and Villupuram. The young and old, the men and women and all without distinction of high and low, squatted on the ground around Bhagavan looking at him with a fixed gaze. While the Arunagiri abounding in mineral wealth served as the precious jewelled-throne, the clouds adorning the sky served the purpose of *Svēta Chhatram* (the white Umbrella) and the tree grove with innumerable branches acted as *vinjāmbarams* (fans used in deity worship). Sri Bhagavan shone in his glory as an emperor crowned, while *Prakriti-kāntā* (Nature personified) waved lights to him with its agreeable rays of the sun.

Brother ! How can I draw that picture for you ? The Mahātma is calm and his serene gaze, coming from the source, pervades all corners. His gentle smile shone like the cool rays of the moon. His words simply rained *amrit*. We sat there like statues without consciousness of the body. The photographers then attended to their job. After 9-30 a.m. the usual daily programme of the Asramam below, relating to mails, newspapers, etc. was gone through as in a Maharaja's durbar. The clouds then increased and the wind blew heavily. The devotees gave Bhagavan a shawl with which he covered his whole body except the face. Then Bhagavan, in his sitting posture, looked like his mother Alagamma incarnate. Aunt and myself were of the same opinion. This scene was also photographed.

Sri Bhagavan preached for some time in silence in the "*gurosthu mownam vyākhyānam*" way. There may certainly be some pure-hearted souls that could all become

“*chhinna samsayah*” (cleared of all doubts). But in my case, my mind ran to the preparations like *pulihodara* and *dadhyodhanam* etc., as it was dinner time. The question was whether everything was offered to the hill or anything was left behind. The doubt was solved after 11-30 in the forenoon. My brethren wished to arrange the delicacies for Bhagavan separately in a comfortable place. But would he agree to that? He got a table arranged by his sofa and feasted there in the midst of all.

After the meal, his sofa was set up on the verandah which has an iron-grating enclosure. The devotees were at first at a distance but in a few minutes came near to Bhagavan. Aunt Alamelu and I with some other women were seated in an adjacent room looking at Bhagavan through a window just opposite to his lotus feet. He then began to talk, telling us short stories about his past life on the mountain, relating the arrival of the mother, the construction of Skandāsramam, the water supply, the supply of provisions, the rule of the monkey kingdom, the peacock dances, his association with serpents and leopards. During this discourse he greeted a new entrant, the poet Naganarya, by enquiring “When did you come?” Turning towards me he observed, “Here he comes”. I replied, “Yes”. Then something was recalled to his mind and he said, fixing his resplendant gaze, “There mother had her *niryān* (left her mortal frame). We made her sit there outside. Still no mark of death was visible in her face.” Like one seated in deep *Samādhi*, divine light was seen in a holy dance. There, just there, where you are now sitting.”

His enchanting words entered my ears like the sweet note of the *Venu* (the divine flute). I stood at this place

worth seeking and heard the words worth hearing. What a glorious day is today !

Kapila liberated Devayani by initiating her into the Reality. Dhruva put Sunita on the path of salvation. Sri Ramana in his turn not only vouchsafed the eternal empire of freedom and bliss to his revered mother but also did the highest honour by installing the Mathrubhūteswara Lingam on her *Samādhi* to make her glory permanently extolled in the world.

On hearing the word "Mother" from the mouth of Sri Bhagavan, I was overcome with ecstasy and tears filled my eyes. It sounded as though the words about the mother were uttered to the daughter. Mahātmās always honour women. They view woman as the mother and love in perfect form. There is no creation without nature. Before the arrival of the mother there was no cooking in the Asramam. The mother came and gave a hearty meal to the residents. The *agnihotra* (fire) first instituted by the mother does the cooking even today and fills the bellies of thousands of devotees.

I turned round to see the photo of that revered mother but, being disappointed on finding none, said silently within, "O Mother, that brought glory to womanhood in general ! We are blessed !" In the meanwhile various kinds of delicacies were served. Half an hour after we ate them, *poori* and *koottu* were given. After helping ourselves we began to go back. After seeing us all off one after another, Bhagavan came down from the throne of Arunagiri accompanied by his attendants and, walking slowly, reached the Asramam at its foot just as the sun sank behind the mountain on the west. Then the routine programme of

Sri Ramanasramam

13

Veda-pārāyana etc. was gone through as usual. The *Chinnaswami* (the *Sarvādhikāri*) and Aunt felt your absence much. I write this just after my return. The rest, if any, will be intimated to you tomorrow.

May the powers of the Mahātmā be heard and seen direct !
Listen ! Can they be transcribed in true perspective ?
Is it possible for any one to do it ?
Let Brahma alone do that job.

27th November 1945

(7) THE NIKSHĒPAM (TREASURE)

I opened yesterday's letter and read it. The march to Skandāsramam was undoubtedly a happy trip. But on deep thinking one thing could not but strike my mind. In a song Vinnokota Venkataratnam writes :—

“He satisfies the hunger and sends them away ; but allows not anybody to see the path to realisation. He behaves as one attached and non-attached. Having shown the path, he never goes to enquire.”

These words seem to have come true. So long as we were there in Skandāsramam, he spoke on some topic or other and after feeding us to the full, commanded us to disperse. Notice this ! By this alone we were overjoyed and upset, losing body-consciousness. The real wealth, the nectar-like treasure must have been hidden by him somewhere in Arunachala. Without allowing us to trace and find out that treasure, he made us forgetful of our real object by administering intoxicants like *pulihodara*, *dadh-*

yodhanam etc. None had opened his lips to ask Bhagavan of that treasure. But the fault really lies with us. This was not the kind of food we really required, but of a different variety, the *ekarasa*, the one without a second. It is said that even a mother never gives anything without being asked. We only silently murmur about some want. But if we yearn for it with genuine hunger, could he not feed us with the spiritual food of everlasting knowledge? He is the ocean of love and sympathy. We didn't know how to ask him for it. How is he affected thereby? He kept his treasure hidden safely in Arunachala as if it were his own house. How striking are the actions of Mahātmās! He always fixes his gaze on *It* through the window. He never becomes unaware of this hidden treasure even for a moment. Is it possible for people like me to find out that treasure? He bestows it on us only when we acquire the requisite merit. It is said that gifts according to one's deserts should be made, and seed according to the nature of the soil should be sown. Though we possess among us such a Bestower as our Guru, we are not able to attain that Treasure, the reason being our own incompetence. What do you say? Is it not true?

28th November 1945

(8) SERVICE OF *ĀTMA SWARŪPA* IS
ĀTMA SEVA

During the last two or three months, Bhagavan's personal attendants have been massaging his legs with some medicated oil to relieve the rheumatic pain. Some of the

PRESENTED

Sri Ramanasramam

15

devotees, zealous in attention to Bhagavan's body, also began massaging by turn every half an hour, and this resulted in upsetting the usual Asramam routine.

Would Bhagavan tolerate all this? He was always considerate even to his personal attendants and would never say emphatically "No" to anything; so he said in a casual way, "All of you please wait for a while, I will also massage these legs a little. Should I too not have some of the *punyam* (grace)?" So saying, he removed their hands and began massaging his own legs. Not only was I very much amused at this but what little desire might have still been lurking in me to touch Sri Bhagavan's lotus feet and thus perform *pranām* was completely obliterated. Bhagavan's words have a peculiar charm of their own! Look! He too wants a little of the *punyam*! What a delicate hint to those who have the intelligence to take it!

It was about that time that a retired judge of ripe old age said, "Swamiji, I should also be given my share of service to the feet of the Guru." To this Bhagavan replied, "Oh, really? *Ātma-vai guruhu!* Service to Self is service to Guru. You are now 70 years of age. You to do service to me? Enough of that! At least from now onwards, serve yourself. It is more than enough, if you remain quiet."

When one comes to think about it, what greater *upadesa* is there than this? Bhagavan says it is enough if one can remain quiet. It is natural for him to do so, but are we capable of it? However much we strive we do not attain that state. What else can we do than depend upon Sri Bhagavan's Grace?

29th November 1945.

(9) *SAMATVAM* (EQUALITY WITH ALL)

I believe it was about a year back. You know Ramachandra Rao, an Ayurvedic physician? For preparing a medicine which would give strength to Bhagavan's body, he made out a long list of the necessary herbs and ingredients and showed it to Sri Bhagavan.. Like a good boy, who would readily obey instructions, Bhagavan went through the whole list, praised the efficacy of the various drugs and finally said, "To whom is this medicine, my dear man?" He said quietly, "For Sri Bhagavan himself". On hearing that, Bhagavan said, "No doubt, you have given me a long list, but where am I to get the money for it? It may cost Rs. 10/-, and whom am I to approach for it?"

Someone quietly said, looking around at the Asramam property, "Whose is all this, Swamiji?"

"Yes, but what have I? If I want a quarter anna, I must go and ask the *Sarvādhikāri*. How should I go and ask him? He gives me a little food, if I go there as soon as the bell rings. I also eat along with the others and then come back, and I might be refused food if I was late. Even in being served food, I come last," said Bhagavan. The poor physician trembled with fear and, with folded hands, said, "Swamiji, I just showed you the list and I myself will get the required drugs." Upon this Bhagavan said, "Oh yes? You will get them? But if that medicine is good for me, it must necessarily be good for all the others here. Can you give it to them also as well as to me?" When some people said, "Why do we want it, Swamiji?" Bhagavan replied, "If people who do

Sri Ramanasramam

17

physical work don't need a body-building tonic, how do I who merely sits here and eats? No, no, that can't be!"

Once before, Dr. Srinivasa Rao told Bhagavan about an Allopathic medicine which gives strength and said that it would be good for Bhagavan if he took it. Bhagavan said, "Yes, that is all right, you are rich and can take anything; but what about me? I am a mendicant. How can I have such a costly medicine?" Then the doctor said, "Bhagavan always declines everything that is offered, but if he agrees to take something, won't it be forthcoming? Or if not medicines, why not take some nutritious food such as milk, fruit, almonds, and so on that will give strength?"

Bhagavan replied: "All right; but I am a *daridra-nārāyaṇā*. How can I afford it? Besides, am I a single individual? Mine is a large family. How can all of them have fruits, milk, almonds etc.?"

Bhagavan dislikes anything special for himself. He has often told us that if anybody brings eatables and distributes them amongst all he will not mind even if he is left out, but he will feel hurt if the eatables are given to him only and not distributed to others along with him. If he is walking along a path, and some people are coming in the opposite direction, he does not like them to step aside for him but instead he will himself step aside and allow them to pass and, until they do, he will not go a step further. We should consider ourselves fortunate if we can imbibe even a thousandth part of this spirit of equality and renunciation.

If dull-witted people like me who do not know his ideas give him preferential treatment in matters of food etc. he excuses a great deal since forbearance is his nature, but

when it goes too far he gets disgusted and says, "What am I to do? They have the upper hand, they are the people who serve, I am the one who eats. I must listen to what they say, and eat when they want me to. You see, this is *swāmitvam* (life of a Swami). Do you understand?" What more admonition can one want than this?

30th November 1945

(10) WORLDLY TROUBLES

About two years back, an old couple from Guntur, who have been visiting the Asramam for a long time past, came and stayed here for two months. The gentleman could not stay away from his house and children for more than two months at a stretch; however, with a view perhaps to put the blame on the wife, he approached Bhagavan and said, "I can't bear these family troubles; I told my wife not to come with me, but she has come. Before even two months have elapsed, she says, 'Come on, let us go. There are a lot of things to attend to at home.' I ask her to go alone but she refuses. Howevermuch I tell her she does not listen to me. Please, Bhagavan, you at least persuade her to go. Then I shall eat with you and stay on here."

Bhagavan replied jocularly, "Where will you go, my dear man, forsaking your family? Will you fly up into the sky? After 'all, you have to remain on this earth. Wherever we are, there is the family. I too came away saying I did not want anything but see, what a big family I have now! My family is a hundred times bigger than.

yours. You ask me to tell her to go, but if she comes and says, 'where am I to go, Swami? I would rather stay here,' what shall I say to her then? You say you don't want your family, but what shall I do with my family? Where shall I go, if I leave all this?"

The people in the hall were all smiles. The old man squatted on the floor, saying, "Yes, but what does it matter to Bhagavan? He is free from all bonds, and so he can bear the burden of any family however big it may be."

You should see how humorously Bhagavan talks about things. Whatever he says has some teaching for us in it. Devotees like myself have got into the habit of telling Bhagavan about some pain in the leg or stomach or back. A person once came and said, "My eyesight is bad, I cannot see properly. I want Bhagavan's grace for my relief." Bhagavan nodded as usual, and as soon as that person had left he said, "He says he has pain in the eyes, I have pain in my legs. Whom shall I ask for relief?" We were all taken aback and kept quiet.

1st December 1945

(11) WHAT IS MEANT BY *SAMSĀRA* ?

During the early days of my arrival here, on one day at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon a middle-aged Andhra, who had come recently, asked Bhagavan, "Swami, as I repeat *Rāmanāmam* (the name of Rama) regularly every morning and every evening for an hour, other thoughts come in, one by one, increase from time to time and ulti-

mately find that I have forgotten my *japam*. What shall I do ? ”

“ At that time catch hold of that name (*Rāmanāmam*) ” said Bhagavan. We all laughed. Poor man ! He felt grieved and said, “ The reasons for these interruption is the *Samsāra* (family), is not it ? I am therefore thinking of abandoning the *samsāra*.” Bhagavan said, “ Oh ! Is that so ? What really is meant by *samsāra* ? Is it within or without ? ” “ Wife, children and others ” he said. “ Is that all the *samsāra* ? What have they done ? Please find out first what really is meant by *samsāra*. Afterwards we shall consider the question of abandoning them,” said Bhagavan. He could not reply and so kept quiet, crest-fallen.

Bhagavan's heart was full of compassion. With a look full of tender kindness he said, “ Supposing you leave your wife and children. If you are here this will become another kind of *samsāra*. Supposing you take to *sanyāsa*. Another kind of *samsāra* comes into existence in the shape of a *karra* (walking stick), *kamandalu* (water bowl) and the like. Why all that ? *Samsāra* means *samsāra* of the mind. If you leave that *samsāra*, it will be the same thing wherever you are. Nothing troubles you.”

Poor man ! He mustered up some courage and said, “ Yes, that is it, Swami. How to give up that *samsāra* of the mind ? ” Bhagavan said, “ That is just it ; you said you were doing the *japam* of *Rāma Nāmam*. During the train of thoughts, you said you were sometimes reminded of the fact that you had forgotten the *japam* of *Rāma Nāmam*. Try to remind yourself of that fact as often as possible and catch hold of the name of Rama frequently. Other thoughts

will then slowly decrease. For the *japaṃ* of *nām* (repeating the name of the Lord) several stages have been prescribed. It is good to repeat the name by the mere motion of the lips than by repeating it aloud ; better than that is to repeat it in the mind and the best is *Dhyānam*.

उत्तमस्तवादुच्चमन्दतः ।

चित्तजं जपध्यानमुत्तमम् ।

(*Upadēsa Sāram* — 6)

2nd December 1945

(12) "GO THE WAY YOU CAME"

On another occasion an Andhra youth came and said, "Swami, having a great desire for *mōksha*, and anxious to know the way thereto, I have read all manner of books on Vedanta. They all describe it, each in a different way. I have also visited a number of learned people and when I asked them, each recommended a different path. I got puzzled and have come to you ; please tell me which path to take".

With a smile on his face, Bhagavan said, "All right, then, go back the way you came." We all felt amused at this. The poor young man did not know what to say. He waited until Bhagavan left the hall and then with a depressed look turned to the others there appealingly, and said : "Gentlemen, I have come a long way with great hope and with no regard for the expenses or discomfort, out of my

ardent desire to know the way to *mōksha* ; is it fair to tell me to go the way I came. Is this such a huge joke ? ”

Thereupon one of them said, “No, Sir. It is no joke. It is the most appropriate reply to your question. Bhagavan’s teaching is that the enquiry, ‘Who am I?’ is the easiest path to *mōksha*. You asked him which way ‘I’ should go, and his saying, ‘Go back the way you came,’ meant that if you investigate and pursue the path from which that ‘I’ came, you will attain *mōksha* ”.

The voice of a Mahātma indicates the truth even when speaking in a light vein. Thereupon the book, “Who am I?” was placed in the hands of the young man who felt astonished at the interpretation, and taking Bhagavan’s words as *upadēsa*, prostrated himself to Bhagavan and went away.

Bhagavan usually gives us his teachings either in a humorous or a casual way or by way of consolation. During my early days at the Asramam, whenever I felt like going home, I would approach Bhagavan at some time when there were hardly any people present and say, “I want to go home, Bhagavan, but I am afraid of falling back into family muddles.” He would reply, “Where is the question of our falling into anything when all comes and falls into us ? ”

On another occasion, I said, “Swami, I am not yet freed from these bonds.” Bhagavan replied, “Let what comes come ; let what goes go. Why do you worry ? ” Yes, if only we could realise what that ‘I’ is, we should not have all these worries.

• •
•
• 3rd December 1945(13) *AHETUKA BHAKTI* (MOTIVELESS
DEVOTION)

In August 1944 a Bengali youth, in ochre coloured robes, by name Chinmayananda, a *prachārak* of the Hindu religion belonging to the Birla Mandir in Delhi came here. He had gone round several countries, visited the Aurobindo Ashram and came here with a letter from Dilip Kumar Roy. He is fond of devotional music and has a fine voice. It was clear from the conversation that he was a follower of the Bhakti cult of Chaitanya. He performed *bhajan* in the presence of Bhagavan four or five times singing songs in Sanskrit and Hindi. It seems some one who was in charge of a modern *adhyātmic* institution told him that he cannot reach his goal in this life unless he stayed at one place undisturbed.

With a view to find out Bhagavan's opinion in this respect, one day he approached Bhagavan and asked in a general way. "Swami, can *sādhaks* attain this goal in life if they go about the world absorbed in singing songs in praise of God? Or should they stay at one place only for the purpose?" "It is good to keep the mind concentrated on one thing only wherever the person wanders. What is the use of keeping the body at one place only if the mind is allowed to wander?" said Bhagavan. "Is *ahetuka bhakti* (devotion without a motive) possible?" asked that young man. "Yes, it is possible" said Bhagavan. Some time back, when some others also asked the same question during conversation, Bhagavan had replied saying, "Why is it not possible?" The *bhakti* (devotion) of Prahlada and Narada was only *ahetuka bhakti*.

The devotion shown by our Bhagavan towards Arunachala is an example of this type of *bhakti*. During the very first *darshan*, Bhagavan had said, "Oh father! I have come here according to your orders and have surrendered myself to you." Look! Bhagavan says, Lord Arunachala had ordered and that he had come! Why was he ordered and why had he come? Bhagavan had come and had surrendered himself completely. If asked for what purpose he had done all that, what is there to say! See the *bhāva* (meaning) in the seventh stanza of *Arunachala Navamani Mala* written by Bhagavan in Tamil. This was translated into Telugu by G. Narasinga Rao. What is the purpose indicated in this stanza? Nothing, Bhagavan tells us, now and then, that *ahetuka bhakti*, *ananya bhakti*, *poorna bhakti* and the like are synonymous with *jñāna* and are not different.

12th December 1945

(14) CONVENTIONAL RESPECT

One morning, during the usual conversations the topic turned on Bhagavan's mother coming away to live with him and on her manner of life, and Bhagavan spoke to us as follows :—

"Mother began coming here frequently and staying with me for long periods. You know I always address even beasts and birds in a respectful manner. In the same way, I used to address Mother also with the respectful form of speech. It then occurred to me that I was doing something hurtful. So I gave up the practice and began addressing

her in the familiar way. If a practice is natural and has become habitual you feel uncomfortable at changing it. But anyway what do these bodily things matter?" He spoke with deep feeling and my eyes filled with tears.

Before the dawn of youth appeared on his face he had relinquished all worldly desires, and with Divine desire he hastened to the holy Arunachala where he reigns in the Kingdom of Eternal Bliss. How can one speak of the enormous fortune of that mother, in having had the privilege of being called '*Amma*' by such a son? In the Vedas, the mother holds the first claim for worship: "*Māthru dēvo bhava*". Even so, the beauty of it is that Bhagavan felt it unnatural for him to address her in the respectful form. If he addressed her so, would she not feel hurt? She felt satisfied only if he addressed her as "Mother". Perhaps Bhagavan felt that he ought not to wound her feelings in so small a matter.

"When my Mother passed away I thought I had escaped bondage and could freely move from place to place and live in solitude in some cave or other, but in fact I have now an even greater bondage; I cannot even move out." Bhagavan often speaks in this way. Mother he had only one, but children he has in thousands, so is not this greater bondage? I tell you, the other day, hearing that Skandāsramam was being repaired, he went there at noon, along with his attendant Rangaswami, just to see, without telling anybody, intending to return quietly. But what happened? We all went there, wild with excitement and surrounded him, and would not allow him to move. It was only with great difficulty that he managed to return with the whole crowd by about 8 p.m.

A fortnight later, the labourers reported to Bhagavan that they had finished constructing the path to Skandāśramam and begged him to have a look at it. Bhagavan said, "We shall see." That morning we all expressed our keen desire to go there. Bhagavan cajoled us, saying, "We will all go there for a picnic some time later." Then in the evening at about 5 o'clock he went out as usual for his walk on the hill and from there slipped away quietly to Skandāśramam. As soon as this became known, men and women alike began going up the hill with torches and lanterns regardless of the approaching darkness. It was one thing for people who do not know Bhagavan's ways to follow him up the hill, but I thought that I, who knew how things were, ought not to go. Twice I started to go up and returned after reaching the first turning, but finally I could not resist the temptation to follow the crowd. Just as the monkey cannot change its nature, however we cajole it, so my mind's natural tendencies reasserted themselves, however much I tried to control them. What is the use of being sorry about it afterwards?

Actually, when all his children came up like that in the darkness, how grieved Bhagavan must have felt that there was no place for them to sit and nothing for them to eat. That is why in his overflowing kindness he later arranged a regular feast for them all there. How could he manage this enormous family but for his wonderful controlling ability? How could he manage to be so detached even in the midst of this big family were he not full of profound peace? Remember, there is nothing beyond the power of the great Master.

*Sri Ramanasramam*27
29th December 1945

(15) ECHAMMA'S DEMISE

On the night of Thursday the 27th at 2-45 Echamma, who was like a mother to Bhagavan, left her body and attained union with the Almighty at Bhagavan's lotus feet. I feel rather gratified than sorrowful at this news. When I moved from her house to a residence near to the Asramam, she would often say, "I loved you as my child. I thought you would see me out of this world, but you have gone away to a distance. Now you will come to me only after I am dead, to see the body off to the cremation ground, won't you?" When she said this, tears used to well up in her eyes. But it happened just as she had said. I only heard the news of her death, not of her sickness. There is a saying, "The child is firm as a rock, the mother fragile as shellac." I am only sorry it came too true in this case.

You remember on the 25th you and your wife presented her with some clothes and she was then busy cooking for guests in the house. That same evening, she was unable to get up and so asked for water and she was given some. After drinking it, she lay quietly and so, all the guests left. I am giving you the details as related by her niece who attended on her. After that drink of water she could not talk or eat, but remained bed-ridden. Next day this news was conveyed to Bhagavan. On the 27th her condition became serious. Telegrams were sent to her relatives. Even though she was almost unconscious she would open her eyes slightly, when anyone called her. At about four in the afternoon one lady wanted to test how far she was really conscious. So she said, "Food does not appear to have been sent to Bhagavan today." Immediately she

heard the word "food" she opened her eyes full and, with an exclamation, cast a questioning look. So as not to disturb her peace of mind, her niece said, "We have sent it," and she nodded her head in approval. That is real *vrita deeksha* (strict observance of a vow). What can one say of the great mother who would not forget her *kainkarya* (service) to Bhagavan, even though she was in the throes of death!

That is all. At 8 o'clock that evening incoherent sounds were coming out of her mouth, her eyes were glazed and she was clearly in the pangs of death. Her nephew came to Bhagavan and brought the news. The Asramam doctor went there, examined her and declared that there was no hope; and then they performed her *jeevaprayas-chitham* (shriving). Anyway, after the news was conveyed to Bhagavan, she had not much suffering, the breathing became easier and feebler and she passed away at 2-45 a.m. I came to know of her illness on Thursday evening and thought I could look her up the next morning but when I came to the Asramam before starting, I heard this sad news. Bhagavan said to me, "Oh, is she dead? I have been waiting to see when she would get away from all these worldly worries. So she has gone away from all these worries. All right, go there and come back."

I went there along with some devotees. I was overpowered with grief when I saw that body with the face still undimmed. She was undoubtedly a powerful personality and, when I was here alone in my early days, she was my sole support. Though much against her will, I changed my residence, she used to bring me food, along with that of Bhagavan whenever I was unwell. In accordance with her previous instructions, I bathed her body in Ganges

water, smeared it with *Vibhuti* (holy ashes) and put on *rudhāksha* beads, and then saw her off on her final journey. All her relatives decided that she should be cremated, not buried.

When I prostrated before Bhagavan at 2-30 in the afternoon, he asked, "How did she die? What did they do?" I replied, "They decided on cremation. Her relatives said that she wished ashes to be buried in her village and a *samādhi* erected over them with a *tulsi* plant for worship." Bhagavan said, "Yes, yes, that is right. The same was done with Ganapati Sastri and others." After I sat down, Bhagavan said in a consoling manner, "I told her quite a number of times not to worry about this food but to stop it. But no! She was adamant and refused to take food until she had served Swami. Even today food was sent to me on her account." I said, "No more now." "That Mudaliar old lady is still there" said Bhagavan. When he said this I was overcome with grief and said, "Whenever Echamma gave me something to eat, she used to get angry if I did not eat it there and then." By this time my eyes were full of tears, and saying, "Yes, yes," Bhagavan changed the subject. The earthly life of a devotee who for thirty-eight years kept this vow as her talisman and worshipped God has now come to an end.

Another interesting thing : On the evening of the 27th, after *Vēdapārayana* and my usual *pradakshina* (round the hall), when I went in to bow before Bhagavan, I saw him seated motionless in *padmāsana*, deeply immersed in *dhyāna* and with his hands hanging loose at his side. His eyes were glowing with radiance as if they were two celestial lights and I felt that the spiritual lustre of the universe had come down in a concentrated form in the shape of Bhaga-

van. I wanted to see it closer and longer but I could not stand the powerful glare and so I merely bowed and came home thinking all the while that there must be some deep significance for that deep meditative state of Bhagavan.

In the night after meals and the subsequent short discourse with Bhagavan at his bedside, Krishna Bhikshu came to my place with a friend. When I enquired of Asramam news, he said that Bhagavan had been deeply self-absorbed with a radiant and distant look the whole evening, and that there must be something great and unusual about it. We wondered what it could be. Subsequently when we heard the details of Echamma's demise, we found that from 5 p.m. onwards yesterday she was in the throes of death and that at 9 p.m. when the news was communicated to Bhagavan, all her agony ceased and she had a peaceful end of her life. Then we all thought that it was to release this great devotee from her mortal state that Bhagavan had assumed that superb radiant form the previous evening.

30th December 1945

(16) THE FIRST *BHIKSHA*

One afternoon, during casual conversation, Bhagavan got into a reminiscent mood and began telling us as follows :

"There used to be in Gopura Subrahmanyeswara Temple, a *Mowna Swāmi* (a silent *sādhu*). One morning when I was going about the Thousand-Pillar-Mandapam, he came with a friend. He was a *Mowna Swāmi* and so

was I. There was no talk ; no greetings. It was soon mid-day. He made signs to his friend to mean : " I do not know who this boy is, but he appears to be tired ; please get some food and give him it." Accordingly they brought some. It was boiled rice. Each grain was sized. There was sour water underneath. There was a bit of pickle to go with it. That was the first *bhiksha* given to me by Sri Arunachaleswara. Actually there is not an iota of pleasure in what I eat now. All the meals and sweets (*pancha bhakshya paramanna*) are nothing compared to that food," said Bhagavan. " Was it on the very first day of Sri Bhagavan's arrival in that place ? " someone asked.

" No, no, the next day. Taking it as the first *bhiksha* given me by Ishwara, I ate that rice and pickle and drank the water given me. That happiness I can never forget," remarked Sri Bhagavan.

" I believe there is some other story about Sri Bhagavan going to the town for the first time for *bhiksha*," said one devotee.

" Yes, there used to be one lady devotee. She very often used to bring me some food or other. One day she arranged a feast for all the *sādhus* and pressed me to dine along with them. I signed her to say that I would not do so and that I would be going out begging. I had either to sit and eat with them all or I go out for *bhiksha*. Yes, it was God's will, I thought, and started out for *bhiksha*. That lady had doubts as to whether I would go out for *bhiksha* or join the feast. She sent a man behind me. As there was no escape, I went to a house in the street to the left of the temple and standing in front of it, clapped my hands. The lady of the house saw me and, as she

had already heard of me, recognized me and called me in, 'Come in, my son, come in.' She fed me sumptuously saying, 'My boy, I have lost a son. When I see you, you seem just like him. Do come daily like this, my boy.' I subsequently learnt that her name was Muthamma," said Bhagavan.

31st December 1945

(17) HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT YOU
DO NOT KNOW ANYTHING ?

During the first week of last month on one morning, an ignorant traveller came to the Asramam and, after staying here for two or three days, and in accordance with the saying "*satra bhojanam matha nidra*" (eating in choultries, sleeping in mutts) went away to eat and stay elsewhere, but was all the same coming here for some days enjoying the bliss of staying near and having the *darshan* of Bhagavan. Before leaving this town he approached Bhagavan one day with great hesitation and said, in humble tones, "Swami, the people sitting here always ask you something and you give them some replies ; when I see that, I also feel tempted to enquire, but I do not know what to ask you. How then can I get *mukti* ? "

Bhagavan, looking at him endearingly and smiling, said, "How do you know that you do not know anything ? " He said, "After I came here, and heard the questions asked by all these people and the replies Bhagavan is pleased to give them, the feeling that I do not know anything, has

come upon me." "Then it is all right. You have found out that you do not know anything, that itself is enough. What more is required?" said Bhagavan. "How to attain *mukti* by that much alone Swami?" said the questioner. "Why not? There is some one to know that he does not know anything. It is sufficient if you could enquire and find out who that someone is. Ego will develop if one thinks that one knows everything. Instead of that, isn't it much better to be conscious of the fact, that you do not know anything and then enquire how you could gain *moksha*?"

He felt happy at that and went his way. That questioner might or might not have understood the essence of that *Bhagawathvāni* (the voice of the Lord) but, for us people here, those words were echoing in our heart of hearts like *mantrāksharās* (letters of the gospel).

1st January 1946

(18) LEOPARDS AND SNAKES

The other day I learnt of one more incident in Bhagavan's life on the hill and so I am writing to you about it. When Bhagavan was living in Virupāksha cave, the roar of a leopard was heard from the place where drinking water was available nearby. By the time the scared devotees had gathered some plates and drums in order to make a noise and drive the leopard away, it had drunk the water it required and gone away with one more roar. Bhagavan looked at these frightened devotees and said to them in an

admonishing tone, "Why do you worry so much? The leopard intimated to me by the first roar that she was coming here. After drinking water she told me by another roar that she was going. She went her own way. She never meddled with your affairs. Why are you so scared? This mountain is the home of these wild animals, and we are their guests. That being so, is it right on your part to drive them away?" Perhaps with the intention of relieving them of their fears, Bhagavan added, "A number of *siddha purushās* live on this mountain. It is perhaps with a desire to see me that they come and go, assuming various shapes. Hence, you see it is not right for you to disturb them."

From that time onwards, the leopard used to come frequently to that place to drink. Whenever the roar was heard, Bhagavan used to say, "There you are! The leopard is announcing her arrival." Then again he used to say, "The leopard announces her departure." In this manner he used to be quite at ease with all the wild animals.

One devotee asked Bhagavan whether it is true that, when living on the mountain, he was friendly with snakes, and one snake crawled over his body, one climbed up his leg and so on. In reply, Sri Bhagavan said :

"Yes, it is true. A snake used to come to me in all friendliness. It used to try to crawl on my leg. At its touch my body used to feel as though it was tickled, so I withdrew my leg; that is all. That snake used to come of its own accord and go away."

2nd January 1946

(19) WON'T YOU PLEASE HEAR MY
SPEECHLESS APPEAL ?

You have seen Jagadeeswara Sastri, haven't you? When he was here, a dog used to go into the hall with him. It was a particularly intelligent dog. When Sastri or his wife came into Bhagavan's hall, it used to come in and sit like a well-behaved child and go out along with them. It was very keen on living in the house. People did whatever they could to prevent it entering the hall but it was no use.

Once the old couple entrusted it to somebody when they went to Madras and did not return for 15 days. At first, during the first four or five days, it used to search in the hall, go round the hall, and go about all the places which they used to frequent; and then, having got tired, perhaps disgusted, with those fruitless efforts, one morning at about 10 o'clock, it came to Bhagavan's sofa and stood there, staring fixedly at Bhagavan. At that time I was sitting in the front row. Bhagavan was reading the paper. Krishnaswami and others tried to send the dog out by threats but in vain. I too asked it to go out. No, it wouldn't move. Bhagavan's attention was diverted by this hubbub and he looked that way. Bhagavan observed for a while the look of the dog and our excitement. He then put the paper aside and, as if he had by his silence understood the language of the dog, waved his hand towards it and said, "Why, what is the matter? You are asking where your people have gone? Oh, I see, I understand. They have gone to Madras. They will be back in a week.

Don't be afraid. - Don't be worried. Be calm. Is it all right? Now, go."

Hardly had Bhagavan completed his instructions, when the dog turned round and left the place. Soon after that Bhagavan remarked to me, "Do you see that? The dog is asking me where its people have gone and when they are returning. However much the people here tried to send it away it wouldn't move until I answered its questions."

Once, it seems, the lady of the house punished the dog with a cane for something it had done and locked it up in a room for half a day. After it was let out, it came straight to Bhagavan as if to complain against her and stayed at the Asramam without going to their house for four or five days. Bhagavan arranged to feed the dog and admonished the lady thus: "What have you done to the dog? Why is it angry with you? It came and complained to me. Why? What have you done?" Finally she admitted her fault in Bhagavan's presence and, with a good deal of cajoling, got the dog to go home.

3rd January 1946

(20) A SQUIRREL

Do you know how much liberty our brother squirrel has with Bhagavan? Two or three years back, there used to be one very active and mischievous fellow amongst the squirrels. One day it so happened that when he came for food, Bhagavan was reading and otherwise occupied and so delayed a bit in giving him some. That mischievous fellow would not eat anything unless Bhagavan himself held it to

his mouth. Perhaps because of his anger at the delay he abruptly bit Bhagavan's finger, but Bhagavan still offered him food. Bhagavan was amused and said, "You are a naughty creature! You have bit my finger! I will no longer feed you. Go away! So saying he stopped feeding the squirrel for some days.

Would that fellow stay quiet? No, he began begging of Bhagavan for forgiveness by crawling hither and thither. Bhagavan put the nuts on the window sill and on the sofa and told him to help himself. But no, he wouldn't even touch them. Bhagavan pretended to be indifferent and not to notice. But he would crawl up Bhagavan's legs, jump on his body, climb on his shoulders and do ever so many things to attract attention. Then Bhagavan told us all. "Look, this fellow is begging me to forgive him his mischief in biting my finger and to give up my refusal to feed him with my own hands."

He pushed the squirrel away for some days saying, "Naughty creature! Why did you bite my finger? I won't feed you now. That is your punishment. Look, the nuts are there. Eat them all." He would not give up his obstinacy either. Some days passed and Bhagavan had finally to admit defeat because of his mercy towards devotees. It then occurred to me that that was the way devotees attain salvation through pertinacity.

That squirrel did not stop at that. He gathered together a number of his gang and they began building a nest in the roof of the hall exactly above the sofa. All the squirrels began squeezing into the beam bits of string, coconut fibre and the like. Whenever there was wind, these things used to fall down; so people got angry and began to drive them away. Bhagavan however used to feel very

grieved at the thought' that there was not sufficient room for the squirrels to build a nest and that the people in the hall were driving them away. We have only to see Bhagavan's face on such occasions to understand the depth of his love and affection for such beings.

When I told Bhagavan that I had written to you about the squirrels in my usual letter, he remarked with evident pleasure : "There is a big story about these squirrels. Some time back they used to have a nest near the beam above me. They had children and then grandchildren and thus the numbers of their family grew very large. They used to play about on this sofa in whatever way they liked. When I went out for my usual walk, some little squirrels used to hide under the pillow, they were given *samādhi*. We could not bear the sight of this, so Madhawa drove the squirrels out of the nest and sealed it by nailing some wooden boards over it. There are lots of incidents about them if one cared to write them."

4th January 1946

(21) *DHARMA IS DIFFERENT FROM
DHARMA-SŪKSHMA*

People occasionally bring to Bhagavan *prasād* consisting of *Ābhuti* (holy ashes) and *Kumkum* (vermillion) from various places such as Tiruchendur Subrahmanya Swami, Madurai Meenakshi, or Rameswaram. Bhagavan accepts it with the greatest reverence saying, "Here, look. Subrahmanya from Tiruchendur has come. See there, Meenakshi from Madurai has come. Here is Ramalinges-

wara from Rameswaram. Here is this God, there is that God." Others bring holy water saying, "This is from the Ganga, that is from Gouthami, that is from the Cauvery, this is from the Krishna." Whenever such water is brought in Bhagavan accepts it, saying, "Here is the Ganga, there is Gouthami, this is the Krishna, that is the Cauvery."

At first this used to puzzle me. When Ramana himself is the embodiment of that Eternal Being, who is the origin of all *thirthās* (holy waters) and who is shining in his abode as himself, how foolish of these people to bring him *prasād* of water from *thirthās* as if they had done a great thing! Are they mad? I wondered!

Sometime back someone brought sea water (*sāgara-thirthā*). Bhagavan accepted it saying, "Upto now all the rivers have come to me, but not the *sāgara*, the ocean. This is the first time it has come. That is very good. Give it here."

When I heard that, I suddenly remembered all the ancient lore and my previous opinion changed completely. That is because it is stated that all *thirthās* (rivers), *samudrās* (seas) and *devatās* go to such Sages as Ramana to pay their respects to their lotus feet. But I used to feel that these were all hyperboles because stones and waters cannot walk to the places where great people live. But now, what I find is that without anybody desiring it, all these holy waters, holy ashes and the like are brought by *bhaktās* and Bhagavan accepts them, saying, "They have come." I could now see from incidents that occur in the immediate presence of the Mahātmās that one should read the inner meaning of things carefully. If that is done, it becomes clear that *dharma* is one thing and *dharma-sukshma* (the underlying principle) is another.

Since Bhagavan accepts all these waters with evident pleasure, it should be interpreted as his accepting the service of all *thirthās* and *prasādās*. This inner meaning occurred to me when *sāgara thirthā* i.e., holy water from sea, was brought in, and all my doubts were cleared up. You remember that when he was living in a cave Bhagavan said when a leopard came : "Many who belong to the class of *siddhās* or realised souls, come to see me in different forms."

8th January 1946

(22) MOKSHA

A few days ago, a lady, a recent arrival, came into the hall at about 3 p.m. and sat there for sometime. All the time she was there, she was trying to get up and ask something of Sri Bhagavan. As Bhagavan appeared not to have noticed her, and was reading a book, she waited for a while. As soon as Bhagavan put the book aside, she got up, approached the sofa and said without any fear or hesitation, "Swami, I have only one desire. May I tell you what it is?" "Yes," said Bhagavan : "What do you want?" "I want *mōksha*," she said. "Oh, is that so?" remarked Bhagavan. "Yes, Swamiji, I do not want anything else. It is enough if you give me *mōksha* alone," said she. Suppressing a smile that had almost escaped his lips, Bhagavan said, "Yes, yes, that is all right; that is good." "It will not do if you say that you will give it sometime later. You must give it to me here and now," she said. "It is all right," said Bhagavan. "Will you give it now? I must be going," said she. Bhagavan nodded.

As soon as she left the hall, Bhagavan burst out laughing and said, turning towards us, "She says that it is enough if only *mōksha* is given to her. She does not want anything else." Subbalakshmmamma, who was seated by my side, took up the thread of the conversation and quietly said, "We have come and are staying here for the same purpose. We do not want anything more. It is enough if you give us *mōksha*." "If you renounce, and give up everything, what remains is only *mōksha*. What is there for others to give you? It is there always. That is," said Bhagavan. "We do not know all that. Bhagavan himself must give us *mōksha*"; so saying she left the hall. Looking at the attendants who were by his side, Bhagavan remarked, "I should give them *mōksha*, they say. It is enough if *mōksha* alone is given to them. Is not that itself a desire? If you give up all the desires that you have, what remains is only *mōksha*. And you require *sādhana* to get rid of all those desires."

The same *bhāva* (idea) is found in *Mahāratnamāla* :

वासनातानवं ब्रह्म मोक्ष इत्यभिधीयते

'It is said that the complete destruction of *vāsanās* is Brahman and *mōksha*.'

16th January 1946

(23) WORSHIP OF THE COW •

You know yesterday was the Kanumu Festival (*Māttu Pongal*). On that day, all over the country, domestic animals are decorated and fed with *Pongal*. In the Asramam also yesterday morning, several varieties of sweetmeats

were prepared and, with garlands made of those sweetmeats, *pūja* to Nandi was performed. Besides this, the worship of the cow also was performed by drawing ornamental lines with lime powder before the cow-shed, by tying plantain trees around the pillars, by hanging garlands of green leaves, by bathing all the cows, by placing *tilakam* (vermilion marks) on their foreheads and garlands around their necks, and by feeding them with *Pongal*. Finally *pūja* was performed to the chanting of *mantrās* and the breaking of coconuts.

Lakshmi is the queen amongst the cows, is she not? You must see her grandeur! Her forehead was painted with turmeric powder, and adorned with *Kumkum*. Around her neck and horns were placed garlands made of roses and several other flowers, as also those made of edibles and sweets. Besides these, garlands made of bananas, sugarcane pieces and coconut kernels, were placed around her neck. Not satisfied with these, the person-in-charge of the animals brought from his own house another garland made of some savoury preparation like *murukku* and placed it on the neck of Lakshmi. When Niranjānāandaswāmi asked him what it was for, he replied with justifiable pride that that was his *māmool* (yearly custom) to do so. When I saw Lakshmi thus decorated like Kamadhenu, I was overjoyed and felt extremely happy.

Bhagavan, who went out at 9-45 a.m., came to the *Gosāla* (cow-shed) at 10 a.m., to shower his blessings on his children there. While he sat on a chair by the side of Lakshmi, enjoying the sight of the beautiful decorations on her, the devotees gave *ārati* with camphor, chanting Vedic hymns such as "*Na Karmanā*" etc. Some devotees said that they would take a photo of Lakshmi.

She was therefore led into the middle of the *Gosāla* after asking the devotees who had gathered into a big group, to step aside. Lakshmi stood there, shaking her head in a graceful manner. Bhagavan also got up, came, and stood by the side of Lakshmi, patting her head and body with his left hand, and when he said, "Steady, please, be steady", Lakshmi gracefully closed her eyes and remained absolutely quiet as if she were in a *samādhi* (trance). Sri Ramana too placed his right hand on her back, and with his walking stick in his left, stood in a dignified manner by the side of Lakshmi, when the photographer took two or three photos. One must see that sight to appreciate the grandeur fully. Another photo was taken when Bhagavan was feeding her with his own hands fruits and sweetmeats. You can see the photos when you come here. I was reminded of Lord Krishna in Repalle when I saw the grand spectacle of Bhagavan standing in the midst of the cows in the *Gosāla*. Not only this, in *Brahma Vaivārtha Purāna* it is stated that Krishna is the *Paramātmā*, the Lord of the cow world, and that Radha is *Prakriti*. The theory in that *Purāna* is that Radha and Madhava are *Prakriti* and *Purusha* — the inseparable pair. Standing with his body bent slightly to the left, and with his left hand on Lakshmi, and with the walking stick in his right hand, looking as if it was a flute, with a sparkling smile on the face like the foam on the waves of the ocean of *ānanda*, with a compassionate look towards the group of devotees that had gathered along with the herd of cows, Sri Ramana, the embodiment of grace, it is no surprise if one were reminded of Lord Krishna Himself standing with crossed legs, resting on his toes and playing exquisitely on the flute. If that Krishna is Ramana, what are we to say of

our Lakshmi who appears to have been completely oblivious of this world with her ears hanging down, with her eyes closed and enjoying transcendental bliss caused by the touch of Bhagavan's hands on her body? Shall I say that she is the embodiment of *Prakriti* in the shape of Radha? Otherwise, how could she understand human language?

It is no exaggeration to say that we, with human eyes, saw in that congregation what is beyond human sight; a world of cows, and its overlords, *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. You would perhaps laugh at my foolish fantasies but take it from me, that sight was so lovely. Every year this worship of the cow is being done, but this year Bhagavan gave us this blissful *darshan* by standing by the side of Lakshmi, because the devotees said that they would take a photo of Lakshmi. What a grand day! I am writing to you, because I could not contain my joy.

17th January 1946

(24) A PAIR OF PIGEONS

One morning in or about September or October 1945, a devotee from Bangalore, by name Venkataswami Naidu, brought a pair of pigeons and gave them to the Asramam as an offering. Seeing that, Bhagavan said, "We have to protect them from cats etc. is it not? Who will look after them? A cage is required; food must be given. Who will do all that here? It is better for him to take them away."

The devotee said he would make all the required arrangements and requested that they should be kept in the Asramam. He placed the pair of pigeons in Swamiji's

lap. With overflowing affection and love, Bhagavan drew them near him, saying, "Come, dears! Come! You won't go back? You wish to stay on here? All right, stay on; a cage will be coming." As he thus petted them with affection, they remained absolutely quiet, closed their eyes as if they were in *samādhi*, and stayed on there without moving this way or that. Bhagavan thereupon stopped petting them, and keeping them on his lap and with his gracious eyes fixed on them, sat in silence, deeply immersed in *samādhi*.

It took nearly an hour for the devotees in the Asramam to find and bring a cage for them. The beauty of it is, all through that one hour, the pigeons sat in Bhagavan's lap without moving this side or that as if they were a pair of Yogis in *samādhi*. What could we say about their good fortune? Is it not the result of their *punya* in previous births that this great sage should seat them on his lap, cajole them, bless them by patting them from the head down to the feet with his hands and thereby bestow on them divine bliss? Not only that; when the cage was brought in, Bhagavan patted them cajolingly and put them in the cage, saying, "Please go in. Be safe in the cage." Then Bhagavan said, "In Bhāgavatham, pigeons also are stated to be in the hierarchy of Gurus, in the chapter relating to *Yadu Samvādam*. I remember having read that story long back."

While the pigeons were in his lap, one devotee came and asked: "What is this?" Bhagavan said, without attachment but assuming responsibility, "Who knows? They come, and decline to go back. They say they will stay on here only. Another family has come on me, as if what I already have is not enough."

Dear brother, it is very interesting to witness these strange happenings. It is said that in olden days Emperor Bharatha renounced the world, and performed great *tapas* (meditation) but towards the end of his life, he thought of his domestic deer and so was born a deer in his next life. In Vedanta *sāstrās* in Bhāratham and Bhāgavatham, there are many stories like this. Bhagavan had told us long back. "Any living being comes to me only to work out the balance of its *karma*. So don't prevent anyone from coming to me." When I looked at those pigeons, it occurred to me that they might be great saints who had fallen from their austerity in meditation; otherwise how could they get on to the lap of Bhagavan, a privilege which is impossible to get for ordinary people? In Canto V of Bhāgavatham there is a verse which says that people born in Bharatavarsha are blessed, since Hari has come there a number of times as an *avatār* and blesses them by His precepts, help and guidance. The above incident is an illustration of this, is it not? What do you say?

18th January 1946

(25) BABY CHEETAHS

About a year ago, some person who was rearing two baby cheetahs, brought them into Bhagavan's presence. When they were fondled by being given milk, not only did they move freely amongst the people in the hall, but they got on to the sofa with Bhagavan's welcome and slept soundly thereon. One of the Asramam devotees took a photo of that unusual group. From about 1 to 3 p.m.,

Bhagavan confined himself to one end of the sofa keeping the cubs on the sofa in the same position all the time. They got up afterwards, and were there till about 4 p.m., moving about freely in the hall. Once again, before Bhagavan went up the hill at the usual time, photos were taken with the cheetah cubs on the sofa and also on the table in front of the sofa. They were published in the 'Sunday Times' later.

The wonder of it was that even the cheetah cubs lay down happily on the sofa, overpowered by sleep induced by the touch of Bhagavan's hands. While they were there, the squirrels came and ate nuts and the sparrows came and ate broken rice, as usual. In olden days, when animals and birds of all sorts moved about together without enmity in any place, people used to think that it was perhaps a Rishi Asramam. They are stories related in the *purāṇas*. But here we see the same thing before our very eyes. When I read out to Bhagavan yesterday's story about the pigeons, and the worship of the cow, Bhagavan said, "Many similar things often happened here previously. But who was there to record them at the time?"

When the first edition of this book* came out and was being read in the presence of Bhagavan, one of the devotees who heard the above story said, addressing him, "Is it a fact that when you were in Pachiamman Koil, somebody got frightened and ran away from an approaching tiger there?" Bhagavan said, "Yes, yes! When I was there, Rangaswami Iyengar used to come off and on. One day, when he went to answer calls of nature it seems he saw a tiger in a bush. When he tried to drive her away by

* In Telugu.

shouting, she replied by a mild roar. His body shook with terror and getting up involuntarily from where he sat, he began running towards me, gasping for breath, shouting, at the top of his voice, "Oh, Bhagavan ! Ramana ! Ramana ! " I happened to come out for some work and so met him. When I asked him what all his fright was about, he said imploringly, 'Ayyō, tiger, tiger ! Come, Swami, we shall get into the temple and close all the doors, otherwise she will come in. Why don't you come ? ' I said, laughing, 'Let us wait and see. Where is the tiger ? It is nowhere.' Pointing towards the bush he said, 'There it is in that bush.' I said, 'You wait here. I shall go and see.' When I went there and saw, there was no tiger. Even so, he could not shed his fear. I assured him that it was a mild animal and there was no need to be afraid but he would not believe me. Another day, while I was sitting on the edge of the tank opposite the temple, that tiger came to drink water, and without any fear, roamed about for a while looking at me, and went its way. Iyengar, however, observed all this, hiding himself in the temple. He was afraid of what might happen to me. After the tiger left, I went into the temple and relieved him of his fear saying, 'Look ! What a mild animal it is ! If we threaten it, it will attack us. Not otherwise.' I thus dispelled his fears. We too were not there for long after that," said Bhagavan.


 20th January 1946

(26) MEDICATION WITHOUT TREATMENT

When the personal attendants of Bhagavan were advised by doctors to give him food containing vitamins to relieve the pain in the legs, they began doing so, and were also massaging his legs with some special ointment. They were thus serving him to the best of their ability. Bhagavan used to say humorously, "A guest comes to your house. If you are indifferent towards him he will go away early, but if you show great respect towards him, and are very attentive he will never go. So is disease. If you attend to the disease in the manner you are doing now, why should it go? If you take no notice of it, it will disappear of its own accord."

Sometime ago, a young man set up an establishment about a mile from the Asramam, on the road round the hill, saying he would cure diseases by giving *Vibhuti*. People get mad over such things, don't they? People who were diseased, possessed and the like were going in crowds to see that Vibhuti Swami, and on their way, they were coming to our Asramam also. What is there at this Asramam? No Vibhuti! No magic lockets! They used to have *darshan*, go round the hall and then go away. On such occasions, if any attendants began to massage his legs with medicated oil, Bhagavan used to say in a lighter vein, "Excellent, this is also good in a way. When these people see me thus, they would say, 'this Swami himself is suffering from pain in the legs and is getting massaged by others. What can he do for us?' And will go away without coming anywhere near me. So far so good."

Four days back, Bhagavan called all the doctors and showed them a news item which he read in the newspapers about a person who was reported to have died as a result of too much of vitamin food or vitamin injections. Next day the news appeared in another newspaper. Showing it again, he began saying, like a child, "For the last two years, a lot of vitamins are being given to me, saying that it is all good food. Not satisfied with it, they tried to give injections also. See what has happened to this person reported in the newspapers!" It is said that a great Yogi enjoys bliss as if he were a little boy or an insane person. He knows everything but conducts himself as if he knows nothing. If he so desires, can he not cure all diseases? Can he not cure himself? He leaves it to others, that is because he never looks upon the body as his own.

Two or three years back when Bhagavan had jaundice, he felt a great dislike for food. For about a week or ten days he ate only popcorns and the like. As Echamma and Mudaliar Patti have a vow that they will not eat until Bhagavan takes at least a morsel of food cooked by them he used to take a few grains from the rice brought by these ladies and mixing them with popcorn, used somehow to swallow that food so that their *vratam* or *diksha* might remain unimpaired. There is no limit to his benevolence towards and consideration for the feelings of his devotees, whatever the occasion might be. He does not allow others to feel pained or aggrieved.

A number of doctors gave him medicines to cure the jaundice. For their satisfaction, Bhagavan used to take the medicines and for the satisfaction of these ladies he used to eat their food. The good effects of the former and the bad effects of the latter did not affect him. Months passed.

A reputed doctor from Madras was called. The result was the same. After all had come and gone, and after all medicines had been tried without success, he cured himself of jaundice in no time, pretending to treat himself with *sonti* (dry ginger), *pippalu* and other Ayurvedic medicines. Let any one ask him how the disease was cured !

21st January 1946

(27) *BHAKTI'S TASTE*

When I was writing to you yesterday about eating popcorn with boiled rice, I was reminded of another incident. Echamma's cooking was never very good as it would not contain vegetables and the like in proper proportions. To Bhagavan her devotion was more tasty than her preparations and so he never cared, but some who could not relish the food casually hinted at this now and then while Bhagavan was partaking in cutting kitchen vegetables in the early morning hours. After hearing their complaints repeatedly Bhagavan said, "I don't know. If you do not like the food you need not eat it. I find it quite good and I shall continue to eat it."

On another occasion, she was sending food for about a week or ten days through someone else as she was perhaps out of town or not quite well. The servers one day forgot to serve the food sent by her and completed serving all other articles of food cooked in the Asramam. Bhagavan who would, after that, usually beckon to others to start eating and would himself commence eating, sat silently that day with his left hand under his chin, and his right hand

on his leaf. As there was no beckoning to others to eat and he did not himself commence eating, the people who were there sitting before their respective leaves began to look at one another. There were whispers in the kitchen, each person enquiring of the others about the possible reason. Suddenly they remembered that the food of Echamma had not been served, and, when they served it saying, "Oh, we have forgotten," he gave the formal signal to the others to eat and he too ate the food. It is usual for him to eat with greater relish the raw groundnuts offered to him by a devotee than the highly seasoned sweets and puddings offered by rich people just as Lord Krishna ate the crushed rice handed over to him by Kuchela.

22nd January 1946

(28) *BRAHMĀSTHRAM* (DIVINE WEAPON)

Yesterday or the day before, a boy of about 18 years of age came here on a cycle from somewhere. After sitting in the hall for a quarter of an hour, he went to Bhagavan and asked, "After crossing *Omkār*, where to merge?" With a smile Bhagavan said, "Oh, is that so? Wherefrom did you come now? Where will you go? What is it you want to know? Who really are you? If you first tell me that, you can question me about *Omkār*." "I do not know that even," said the boy. Then Bhagavan said, "You know for certain that you are existent. How are you existent? Where really were you? What exactly is your body? First find that out. When you know that, you can ask me

55-1 Shri. M. Anandmayee Ashram

Some time later, I took up the idea and wrote five verses on "*Divya Asthram*" and showed them to Bhagavan, when he said, "Long ago when Nayana (Ganapati Muni) was here, Kapali also used to be here. If they wanted to ask me anything, they would fold their hands first and say, "Swami, Swami, if you will promise not to brandish your *brahmāsthram*, I will ask a question." If, during conversation, the words 'Who are you?' escaped

my lips, he used to say, 'So you have fired your *brahmāsthram*. What more can I talk?' They called it *brahmāsthram* and you are calling it "*Divya Asthram*". After that, I too started using the word "*brahmāsthram*" only. Really, who is it that is not humbled by that *asthram*?

23rd January 1946

(29) THAT IS PLAY, THIS IS VERSE

Some time back, while replying to the questions of some devotees, Bhagavan was reminded of a *sloka* in "Hamsa Gita" which described the attributes of a *siddha* (highly developed soul) and with great enthusiasm, wrote out a verse in Tamil. As Balarama Reddi who happened to be there said, "What about a verse in Telugu also?" Bhagavan wrote a translation in Telugu in *Aataveladi* (a form of versification) and was wondering whether the import of the *sloka* had come out correctly. I suggested in a low tone that it might perhaps be better if it were in *Theta Gita* (another form of versification). "Yes, it could be changed thus," said Bhagavan; "That is *Aata*, this is *Theta*." I was rather intrigued at that.

When I went there again in the afternoon at 2-30 p.m., Bhagavan had already written it in *Theta Gita* verse and gave it to me saying, "See if it is all right." Though it did not appear smooth flowing, I was happy in the thought that Bhagavan had written it and so without going deeper into it, I said; "In whatever way Bhagavan writes, to me it appears quite good." "It is quite enough even if one person is satisfied, when written by an incompetent person like myself," said Bhagavan. People around burst out

laughing. He says he is not competent ; and all the others are great Pandits ! What else is it except a gentle hit at some of us who pride ourselves on our erudition.

It did not end there. Saying that the meaning is incomplete here or the grammar is defective there, Bhagavan discussed it the whole day with Balarama Reddi, and when I went there yesterday morning for *pārāyana*, he gave me a paper on which the *padyam* (verse) had been fair-copied.

When I brought it home and saw it, not only did I feel some doubt regarding the correctness of a particular letter in the *padyam*, but also I got a desire to copy the matter in the Asramam note book and keep the original paper for myself and so, I cut it out neatly with scissors, and left it in my bag and went to the Asramam by 8 a.m.

Even as I was prostrating before him, Bhagavan made a mention of the very letter, about which I had a doubt. He said, "It must be changed, give me back my paper. Should I not show it if anyone were to ask for it ?" Yes, he understood the two ideas that I had in my mind. I felt surprised.

Many instances of this kind have occurred previously. When Bhagavan asked me and insisted for the return of his paper like a school boy, I felt ashamed of my desire, afraid of being chided, and amused at his teasing words — all at the same time.

"I have brought it, here it is," I said and gave it. He took it, and put it away carefully as though it was a great treasure. The whole of yesterday he kept on saying that the grammar was not correct and such like. When I was asked about it, I said, "For the divine voice, will the grammar come in the way ?"

Bhagavan said laughingly, "It is all right," and ultimately Bhagavan himself prepared it in "*Theta Gita*" and gave it to me to copy it out on the distinct understanding that I should return the original paper to him. For a small job like this, he played with us for three days and ultimately finished it in "*Theta Gita*."

"That is *Aa'ia* (play) ; this is *Theta* (verse)." This is perhaps the meaning of his words. That verse is given hereunder :

"*Theta Gita*"

తే॥ ఒడలు నశ్వర మదిస్థితం బుద్ధితంబొ
కర్మవశమున విడువడఁ గలయగలదొ ।
ర న్నెఱింగిన సిద్ధుడు తనువు గనఁడు
గుడ్డను మదిరామదమున గ్రుడ్డివలెనె ॥

26th January 1946

(30) ANGER

Yesterday a newly arrived Andhra youth told Bhagavan about the vagaries of his senses, to which Bhagavan said, "All that is due to the mind. Set it right." "That is all right, Swami, however much I try to reduce this anger, it comes on again and again. What shall I do?" said the poor boy.

"Oh, is that so, then get angry with that anger ; it will be all right," said Bhagavan. All people in the hall burst out laughing. If a person who gets angry with every-

thing in the world, only introspects, and enquires why he does not get angry with his anger itself, will he not really overcome all anger ?

Two or three years back a devotee who could freely approach Bhagavan, came and told him five or six times that somebody was always abusing him. Bhagavan listened but said nothing. As there was no response from Bhagavan in spite of repeated and varied complaints and in a number of ways, this devotee could not contain himself any longer and so said, "When I am abused so much unnecessarily, I also get angry. However much I try to restrain my anger I am not able to do so. What shall I do ?"

Bhagavan laughingly said, "What should you do ? You too join him and abuse yourself ; then it will be all right." All laughed.

That devotee, unable to understand anything, said, "That is very good ! Should I abuse myself ?"

"Yes indeed ! What they are abusing is your body, isn't it ? What greater enemy is there than this body which is the abode of anger and similar feelings ? It is necessary that we ourselves should hate it. Instead of that, when we are unguarded, if anybody abuses us, we should know that they are waking us up. We should realise at least then, and join them in abusing the body, and crying it down. What is the use of counter-abuse ? Those who abuse us that way should be looked upon as our friends. It is good for us to be among such people. If you are among people who praise you, you get deceived," said Bhagavan.

In June 1924, thieves entered the Asramam and not only belaboured the devotees, but also beat Bhagavan on his thigh. Subsequently, while relating amongst themselves

the thrashing they had received, the devotees said, "Bad fellows, they beat even Bhagavan." Bhagavan is reported to have said, "Oh, you all worship me with flowers and they worshipped me with a stick. That is also worship. If I accept yours, should I not accept theirs as well?" What he teaches is by practical illustration. Is not this an instance?

27th January 1946

(31) DECORATIONS TO AMBA

You have seen the decorations made in the shrine of Mathrubhuteswara on the first day of *Navarāthri* festival last year. There was a different type of decoration every day during those nine days, and on one of the days, in accordance with the Puranic story that Amba went out to do *Tapas* as she could not bear the separation from Siva; the idol of Amba was decorated suitably and was put in the shade of a tree. After the night meal was over that day, Bhagavan was taken to that place and was shown that idol.

Next morning, in the hall, while talking about the ornamentation in the temple of Arunachaleswara and in this shrine, Bhagavan said, "Yesterday's ornamentation was intended to show that Amba was doing *Tapas*. Unable to bear the separation, Parvathi is depicted as sitting in a stylish pose, under a tree, to do *Tapas*, wearing a silk saree, gold jewels and flower garlands. What our people do is always like this. *Tapas* means meditation connected with the practice of self-denial or bodily mortification, does it

not? Amba is reported to have closed the eyes of Siva with both her hands for fun and to expiate that sin, Parameswara asked her to perform penance, and so she left her husband, went to a lonely place, and in self-mortification, forgot about her body, became weak and with great austerity, performed *Tapas*. See the way Amba is decorated to depict that story. She is dressed like a Maharani with diamonds and emeralds and gold ornaments and wearing a silk saree and flower garlands!"

30th January 1946

(32) AVVAIYAR'S SONG

For the last four days Bhagavan has been going through "*Sri Ramana Lila*" (in Telugu) which has recently been received from the printers. Seeing in it the translation of one of Avvaiyār songs, he said it was not correct. It had been written thus :—

"Oh, stomach! You will not go without food even for one day, nor will you take enough for two days at a time. You have no idea of the trouble I have on your account, Oh, wretched stomach! It is impossible to get on with you!"

He said that was not right and that it should be :—

"'You don't stop eating for a day even. Why won't you eat once in two days? You do not realise my difficulty even for a day. So the *Jiva* says, 'Oh, stomach! It is difficult to get on with you!'"

People like us are afraid of death. Why? Because the belief that we are the body is not gone yet. To those who know the real truth about the self, the body itself is

a burden. So long as the two are together, some effort is inevitable for eating and sleeping. Even that is a disturbance to the bliss enjoyed by such people, just as the clothes we wear appear to be a burden in mid-summer. Under such circumstances, any effort at serving such people will perhaps be like asking them to put on a full suit when they are anxious to remove even the existing clothing on account of the distress caused by continuous perspiration. The *Jiva* says that it is difficult to carry on with this stomach. Instead of that, Bhagavan has given a different meaning to that verse. According to him the stomach itself tells *Jiva* it is difficult to carry on with it! See the beauty of it. "O, *Jiva*! You don't give me, the stomach, even a moment's respite. You don't understand my troubles. It is impossible to live with you." That means, the *Jiva* does not stop breathing even for a moment. So the stomach says, it is difficult to live with it indeed!

When I read this letter before Bhagavan, a Tamil disciple after finding out what it was all about said, "Avvaiyār's song is well known but Bhagavan's interpretation is rather novel. No one else has shown such consideration for the stomach. It is not known in what context Bhagavan wrote thus." Smilingly Bhagavan said, "On a full moon day in the month of *Chaitra* we were all sitting together after a hearty meal with sweets and the like. As we had our food that day later than usual, we were feeling rather tired. Amongst us, Somasūndaraswami sang the *venpa* written by Avvaiyār, lying down in the hall, rolling about and patting his stomach. I wrote this *venpa* in fun, and sang it. What has been read just now is the meaning of those two songs."

31st January 1946

(33) ASTRAL PATHS—HIGHER WORLDS

This morning after reading an article in the newspaper about paths beyond the sun and the higher worlds thereafter, Bhagavan said, "They write a lot about the paths beyond the sun and other planets, and the blissful worlds above them. All those worlds also are like this world. There is nothing specially great about them. Here, a song is being transmitted over the radio. Last time, it was from Madras. Now it is from Tiruchirapalli. If you tune again it will be from Mysore. All these places are in Tirumanna-malai, within this short time. It is the same way with the other worlds. You have only to turn your minds to them. You can see them all in one moment. But what is the use? You merely go about from place to place and get tired and disgusted. Where is *shānti* (peace)? If you want it, you must know the eternal truth. If you cannot know that, the mind will not get absorbed in *shānti*."

Similarly someone enquired of Bhagavan some time back, "People talk of Vaikunta, Kailāsa, Indralōka, Chandralōka etc. Do they really exist?" Bhagavan replied, "Certainly. You can rest assured that they all exist. There also a Swami like me will be found seated, and disciples like this will also be seated around. They will ask something and he will say something in reply. Everything will be more or less like this. What of that? If one sees Chandralōka, he will ask for Indralōka, and after Indralōka, Vaikunta and after Vaikunta, Kailāsa, and then this and that, and the mind goes on wandering. Where is *shānti*? If *shānti* is required, the only correct method

of securing it is by self-enquiry and through self-enquiry self-realization is possible. If one realises the Self, one can see all these worlds within one's self. The source of everything is one's own self, and if one realises the Self, one will not find anything different from the Self. Then this doubt will not arise. There may or may not be a Vaikunta or a Kailāsa but it is a fact that you are here, isn't it? How are you here? Where are you? After you know about these things, you can think of all these worlds."

1st February 1946

(34) BOOKS

One morning in 1944, a disciple approached Bhagavan with an air of supplication and said, "Bhagavan, I would like to read books and find out a path whereby I can attain *mukti* but I do not know how to read? What shall I do? How can I realise *mukti*?" Bhagavan said, "What does it matter if you are illiterate? It is enough if you know your own Self." "All people here are reading books but I am not able to do that. What shall I do?", he said.

Stretching out his hand towards the disciple, Bhagavan said, "What do you think the book is teaching? You see yourself and then see me. It is like asking you to see yourself in a mirror. The mirror shows only what is on the face. If you see the mirror after washing your face, the face will appear to be clean. Otherwise the mirror will say there is dirt here, come back after washing. A book does the same thing. If you read the book, after

realising the Self, everything will be easily understood. If you read it before realising the Self, you will see ever so many defects. It will say, 'First set yourself right and then see me.' That is all. First see your Self. Why do you worry yourself about all that book learning?"

The disciple was satisfied and went away encouraged. Another disciple who has the courage to ask questions on such matters, took up the thread of the conversation and said, "Bhagavan, You have given him a peculiar interpretation." Bhagavan replied, "What is peculiar in it? It is all true. What books did I read when I was young? What did I learn from others? I was always immersed in meditation. After some time, Palaniswamy used to bring from various people a number of books containing vedantic literature and used to read them. He used to make many mistakes in reading. He was elderly and was not well-read. He was however anxious to read. He used to read with tenacity and religious faith. Because of that I used to feel happy. So, when I took those books in order to read them myself, and tell him what was in them, I found that what all was written therein had already been experienced by myself. I was surprised. I wondered, 'What is all this? It is already written here in these books about myself.' That was so in every one of those books. As whatever is written there has already been experienced by myself, I used to understand the text in no time. What took him twenty days to read, I used to finish reading in two days. He used to return the books and bring others. That was how I came to know about what was written in the books."

"That is perhaps why Sivaprakasam Pillai, while writing Bhagavan's biography, referred to Bhagavan even at the

outset, 'One who is a *Brahma Jnani* without knowing the name of Brahman', said the same disciple. "Yes. Yes. That is right. That is why it is said that one should first know about oneself before reading a book. If that is done, it will be known that what is written in the book is only an epitome of what is really experienced by oneself. If one does not see one's Self but reads a book, one finds a number of defects," said Bhagavan. "Is it possible for all to become like Bhagavan? The use of a book at least helps one to set right one's defects," said the disciple. "That is so. I did not say that reading is no help. I merely said that there is no need for illiterate people to think they can never attain *mōksha* on that account and thereby feel disheartened. See how depressed he was when he asked me. If the truth is not told, he will feel still further depressed," said Bhagavan.

2nd February 1946

(35) DISEASE

Two years back, when our elder brother came to the Asramam, Mr. Manne Venkataramayya, retired Judge, was here. It seems he was sick some time back and got cured but not completely. After listening to the details of the sickness from early morning till 8-30 p.m., Bhagavan said, "Yes, indeed! The body itself is a disease. If another disease has come over and above this, it means that the original disease has got another disease. If you really want this new disease not to trouble you, you must first take the required medicine for the original disease so that

the later disease — that is, the disease of the disease — does not affect you. What is the use of worrying about the secondary disease instead of trying to find out a method of getting rid of the original disease? Therefore allow this new disease to go its own way, and think of a medicine for the original disease."

As an illustration of this, an incident happened recently. Being requested and encouraged by the devotees, Viswanatha Brahmachari translated into Tamil prose *Tri-sūlapuram Mahātmyam* from Sanskrit. By the time he finished translating it, Bhagavan was slightly ill and so, being afraid that Bhagavan might strain himself unduly by going through the book with a view to correcting it, the fact that the book was ready was kept from him. Before he recovered completely, Bhagavan happened to see Viswanath one day and asked him, "How far have you got with translating *Mahātmyam*?" Unable to tell a lie to Bhagavan, he said he had completed it. "Why did you not bring it then?" asked Bhagavan. Viswanath replied that he did not do so because of Bhagavan's indisposition. "Oh, I see! If my body is not well, what does it matter to me? Let it have its troubles. I don't bother about it. I am free. Bring it, and I will go through it. If this body required any services, all these people will attend to that. Bring the book," said Bhagavan. As he had no other alternative, he brought the book and gave it, and Bhagavan went through it immediately, even working at nights, with the aid of a lamp. His bodily ailment did not interfere with the work.

5th February 1946

(36) *KOWPĪNAVANTAH KHALU BHĀGYAVANTAH*(FORTUNATE ARE THOSE WITH A MERE
LOIN-CLOTH)

You know, off and on, Bhagavan has been going through *Sri Ramana Lila* which has recently been received from the printers. In that connection, Rangaswami asked yesterday, "Has the story about the towel been written in it?" As it was not in the book, Bhagavan told us as follows :

"About forty years back — about 1906 — when I was in Pachiamman Koil, I had with me only one Malayalam towel. It was given to me by somebody. As the material was flimsy it became worn out within two months and had a number of holes in it. Palaniswami was not in town. I had therefore to look after the cooking and all other domestic work. As I used to dry my feet and hands with the towel every now and then, it got all sorts of colours. Its condition would be seen if I used it as a cover for the body. So I used to roll it and keep it near at hand. What did it matter to me what it was like? It was enough if the required work got done with its help. After bathing, I used to dry myself with the towel, and then put it out to dry. I used to guard it carefully so that no one else would know about it. One day a mischievous little boy saw when I was drying it, and said, 'Swami, Swami, this towel is required by the Governor. He has asked me to get it from you. Please give it to me.' So saying he humorously-

stretched out his hand. 'Oh, dear! This towel! No, I cannot give it. Go away!' I said.

"As that towel gradually got torn more and more with a thousand holes in it, I ceased to keep it with me lest it should be seen by Sesha Iyer and others. I used it after my bath, and then after drying it, hid it in a hole in the trunk of a tree within the temple precincts. One day, when I went out somewhere, Sesha Iyer and others, while searching for something else, happened to put their hands into that hole in the tree trunk, and found the towel. Seeing its condition and blaming themselves for their neglect, they began offering profuse apologies when I returned. 'What is the matter?' I asked. 'Is it this towel with a thousand holes that you are daily drying your body with after your bath? Shame on our devotion to you! We could not find out even this.' So saying, they brought several bundles of towels.

"Something else also happened before this. My *kowpinam* (small piece of cloth, usually a small strip, worn over the privities) got torn. I do not usually ask anyone for anything. Bodily privacy has however to be maintained. Where could I get a needle and thread available to mend the *kowpinam*? At last, I got hold of a thorn, made a hole in it, took out a thread from the *kowpinam* itself, put it into the hole and thus mended the cloth, and so as to hide the place where it was mended, I used to fold suitably before putting it on. Time passed like that. What do we need? Such were those days!" said Bhagavan.

It was quite natural for him to tell us all this but we who heard him felt deeply grieved. Having heard this incident from Bhagavan some time back, Muruganar is

reported to have written a verse. The purport of that song is :

“Oh, Venkata Ramana, who wore a *kowpinam* mended by a thorn, and who was served by Indra as a towel with a thousand eyes.”

20th February 1946

(37) MOKSHA WITH THE BODY

About a week back, a newcomer to the Asramam asked Bhagavan, “Is it possible to attain *Mōksha* (deliverance) while still in this body?” Bhagavan said, “what is *mōksha*? Who attains it? Unless there is bondage, how can there be *mōksha*? Who has that bondage?” “Me,” said the questioner. “Who really are you? How did you get the bondage? And why? If you first know that, then we can think of attaining *mōksha* while in this body” said Bhagavan. Unable to ask any further question, he kept quiet and after a while he went away.

After he left, Bhagavan, looked at all the rest of us with kindness in his eyes, and said, “Many people ask the same question. They want to attain *mōksha* in this body. There is a *sangham* (society). Not only now, but even in olden days many people not only taught their disciples but also wrote books to the effect that there were *kāya kalpa vratās* (rejuvenation), and such things, and that this body could be made as strong as an adamant, so as to become imperishable. After saying all that, doing ever so many things and writing about them at length, they died in course of time. When the guru himself who talked and preached

of rejuvenation passed away, what about his disciples? We do not know what will happen the next moment to a thing that we see now. Peace cannot be attained unless through self-enquiry one realises that one is not the body and, with *vairāgya* (absence of worldly desires and passions), one ceases to care about it. *Mōksha* is after all the attainment of *shānti* (perfect peace). If therefore peace cannot be attained so long as the body is identified with the Self, any attempt to keep the body for ever as it is, increases the bondage instead of decreasing it. It is all an illusion," said Bhagavan.

21st February 1946

(38) *CHIRANJEEVIS* (IMMORTAL BEINGS)

Yedavalli Rama Sastri came here the other day and asked Bhagavan "Swami, people say that the Self is as luminous as a crore of suns. Is that true?" Bhagavan said, "Certainly! Granted that its lustre is equal to that of a crore of suns, how could it be determined? We can't see with these eyes even the one sun that is visible. How can we see a crore of suns? That is a different eye with a different type of vision. When you could see with that eye, you can give whatever name you like to it, a crore of suns or of moons, or anything you like."

Some time back, another person asked a similar question, "It is said that Aswathama, Vibheeshana and others are *chiranjeevis* (eternally living beings) and that they are now living somewhere. Is that true?" "Yes, that is true," said Bhagavan. "What is your idea of a

chiranjeevi? Those that know the state which is never destroyed, those that know their real state, where is death for them, and where is birth? They live as *chiranjeevis* for all time and at all places. We are now talking about them, and so they are present here. When it is said that a person lives for ever, it does not mean this body consisting of the five elements. When *Brahma Kalpās* (ages of Brahma) themselves come and go like dolls' houses, is it possible to attribute permanency to bodies that age?" said Bhagavan.

26th February 1946

(39) U M Ā

Before I started writing these letters, a devotee while talking about the *Purānās* one morning asked of Bhagavan as to how Parvathi got the name of Umā. Looking at me, Bhagavan said, "There is a copy of *Arunāchala Purāna* in Telugu in the library, is it there?" "Yes, it is in the library; shall I bring it?" I asked. "Yes, yes!" he said. Immediately, I brought the book from the library and gave it to him.

Opening it, Bhagavan said, "Here is the story. Sati Devi, the wife of Siva and the daughter of Daksha, gave up her life as she was insulted by her father during the *yajna* performed by him. She was subsequently born to Himavantha and Menaka. She wanted only Lord Siva as her husband, and to achieve that purpose she set out for doing *tapas*. Menaka, while trying to prevent her from doing so, said, 'U (no), Mā (give up)'. That is how she got the

name of Umā." After reading that out, he gave me the book. While I was turning over the pages, Bhagavan was laughing quietly. I could not make out the reason. After a while, Bhagavan himself told us the following :—

"Look! There is another story to it. Parvathi started out for *tapas*, even though Menaka tried her best to dissuade her. Finding dissuasion of no use, Himavantha took her (Parvathi) to the *tapōvana* (hermitage) where Siva was staying in the form of Dakshinamurthy and said, 'This little child of mine wants to do *tapas*. Please allow her to be under your care.' Seeing Parvathi, Siva said, 'Why *tapas* at this tender age? Why does not she go home with her father?' Parvathi said, 'No, I won't go.' Parameswara tried to dissuade her skilfully by saying 'I have conquered *prakrithi* (nature) and so could concentrate on this *tapas*. If you are to be here, you will be exposed to the ravages of *prakrithi*. So please go back.' Parvathi was equally skilful; so she said, 'Oh Lord! You say you have conquered *prakrithi*. Without some relationship with *prakrithi* how could you do *tapas*? You have just spoken. How could you do that without *prakrithi*? How could you walk? Without your knowing it *prakrithi* is occupying your heart. If it is not for the sake of arguments, if you are really above the influence of *prakrithi*, why are you afraid of my staying here?' Siva was pleased with this and said, "Ingithagna! (you who are skilled in thought-reading), Madhuravachani! (you who are sweet of speech). Stay on!' and sent Himavantha home. This story is in this book in detail."

I said, "The story of Dākshāyani is in the Bhāgavatam also, but this conversation is not given there. The story itself is very interesting." Bhagavan said laughing, "Yes,

yes. I read another story somewhere in which it was stated that after Kama was burnt to ashes, Parameswara came in a Brahmin's garb, made love to Parvathi and married her. Himavantha was worried over the caste of his son-in-law. What could he do? Whomsoever he asked, pleaded ignorance of the matter, and there was no one who could enlighten him. So he kept quiet. Subsequently Parvathi closed the eyes of Parameswara for fun, whereupon the whole world fell into turmoil. Parameswara saved the world by opening this third eye. Then Parvathi realised her fault and started doing *tapas*, and after staying here and there for the purpose she at last came here where she got the approbation of Arunagireeswara, and obtained *ardhasareeram* (half the body of Siva). When Himavantha came to know of it, he said 'Oh yes, the son-in-law is not of another caste but he is of our own caste' and felt pleased and happy. This Arunachala is a mountain. Himavantha too was a mountain. That was the fun."

11th April 1946

(40) *ASTHI, BHĀTHI AND PRIYAM*

(EXISTENCE, CONSCIOUSNESS AND BLISS)

Yesterday, between 10 and 1.1 a.m., a Parsi doctor brought a letter and gave it to Bhagavan. Bhagavan got it read out by a devotee, and said, "He himself has written the question and the answer as well. What else is there for me to say?" As the letter was in English, I could not understand it. The devotee who read it looked at Bhagavan

and asked, "*Asthi*, *bhāthi* and *priyam*, is written there. What is the meaning?" "*Asthi* means Truth, that which IS. *Bhāthi* means lustre and *priyam* means *ānandam*. That is *Sat-Chit-Ānanda swarūpa*. *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* is spoken of as *asthi*, *bhāthi* and *priyam*. Both sets of expressions mean the same" said Bhagavan.

The same devotee asked, "As *Ātma*³ is devoid of name or form, should it be meditated upon with '*Jnana Atheetha Bhakti*', *Bhakti*, which is superior to and above *Jnana*?" Bhagavan replied, "If you say that you should meditate, doesn't that imply *Dwaita*, (Dualism)? It implies one who meditates, and that on which he meditates; *Ātma* however is nameless and formless. How is it possible to meditate upon the nameless and formless? '*Jnana Atheetha Bhakti*' means one's own Self, nameless and formless, just a Witness. The eye is one's own self. That eye is everywhere, Only one eye. Then what is there to meditate upon? Who is it that meditates? It is the eye that is everywhere which is called *asthi*, *bhāthi* and *priyam*, or *Sat-Chit-Ānandam* or by many other names. The names are many, but the thing is only one," said Bhagavan.

15th April 1946

(41) THE TRUE NATURE OF PRADAKSHINA*

You know what a good day it is today! *Bhagavan has taught us something very great. From the time I came

* A reverential salutation made by circumambulation from left to right so that the right side is always turned towards the person or object circumambulated.

here, it has been my usual practice, mornings and evenings, to bow before Bhagavan after going round the hall thrice by way of *pradakshina*.

When I was doing *pradakshina* as usual this morning, some other-worldly voice came out of Bhagavan's mouth and struck my ears as if from a flute. Wondering what it was, I looked up towards Bhagavan's sofa through the window. The rays of the morning sun were falling on Bhagavan's body and were giving out a peculiar lustre. Dr. Srinivasa Rao was massaging Bhagavan's legs with ointment. A light smile was visible on Bhagavan's face. "Oh, it is only Nagamma! I thought it was somebody else," he was saying. I felt that he would tell me something, and so I prostrated before him as soon as I entered the hall. Bhagavan smilingly said, "So! You too have started after seeing others, have you? How many times do you do *pradakshina*?" I was rather surprised and as I was asked about the number of times, I said, "Thrice." "That is enough. Others also will do the same, following your example. That is the trouble. I told them not to do it. I tell you also. What do you say?" "What is there for me to say? I shall stop doing it, if you advise me to." So saying, I sat down. Looking at me, Bhagavan said, "See, these people go on doing *pradakshina* round the hall without end. It was only yesterday I told them not to do it. They will say, 'Nagamma also is doing *pradakshina*. Should she also not be told?' That is why I am telling you." Bhagavan then told us all:—

"What is meant by *pradakshina*? Sankara has said :

परिभ्रमान्ति ब्रह्माण्डाः सहस्राणि महेश्वरे ।

कूटस्ताखिल रूपेऽस्मिन् इति ध्यानं प्रदक्षिणम् ।

"Real *pradakshina* is the meditation that thousands of universes are revolving around the Great Lord, the unmoving centre of all forms."

If people see you going round the hall, newcomers will think that they should do the same, and will start doing it as they do round a temple. Why all that?

The same *bhāva* (idea), was expressed in Tamil by the author of *Ribhu Gita* in greater detail." So saying Bhagavan got that book, read it and told us the following :

"Oh Lord ! I went all round the world to do *pradakshina* to you but you are in fullness everywhere. How then could I complete a round ? I shall worship you as '*kūtas̥tha akhila rūpa*' (immovable entire form of the world). That is the only *pradakshina* to you." *Namaskār* also means the same thing. The merging of the mind in the self is *namaskār* and not the mere act of prostrating whenever you get up or sit down or whenever you go that side or come this side."

Both Doctor and Mudaliar said, "What you say about *pradakshina*, *namaskar* and the like may be for those who are in *atheetha sthithi* i.e., in a highly developed state, but for people like us, is it not necessary to prostrate before the Guru ? It is said that the Advaita attitude should not be shown towards the Guru, even if it is shown towards all the three worlds."

"Yes, it is so. The Advaita attitude does not mean that you should not do *namaskar* and the like. Only it should not be overdone. Advaita should be in *bhāva*, in the disposition of the mind ; it will not do for outside, worldly affairs. You are asked to look at everything with equality (*sama drishti*) but can we eat the same food that a dog eats ? A handful of grain will do for a bird but

will that do for us? We eat a certain quantity of food but will that be enough for an elephant? So you should have the attitude of Advaita only in *bhāva*, in the mind, but you should follow the world in other matters. Though there are no pains and pleasures for a *jñāni*, for the sake of others, he does everything. He is like those who beat their chests, and weep loudly, if ordered to, for an agreed price. That is all. He is not affected by it," said Bhagavan.

Someone asked, "What is that about beating chests and weeping for wages?" Bhagavan replied, "In olden times, there used to be such a practice. Supposing some elderly person dies and no one in the house bothers to weep for him, what is to be done? Someone must weep for the person who is dead. That was required by custom. There used to be some professional people whose vocation was to weep for a fee. If called, they used to weep better than the deceased's kith and kin, methodically, like *bhajan* and with great variety, by beating their chests and shedding tears, which flowed either by long practice or by squeezing onion juice into their eyes, and they used to finish this programme on to schedule. In the same manner, the *jñāni* also conducts himself according to the wishes of others. He keeps time to whatever tune is sung. As he is well-experienced, nothing is new to him. He goes to whoever calls him. He puts on whatever garb he is asked to wear. It is all for the sake of others, as he does not desire anything for himself. His action will be according to the desire of the person who asks. One must therefore find out for oneself sufficiently well what is really good and what is really bad," said Bhagavan.

Previously whenever Bhagavan asked those devotees who were close to him, "Why is this done?" or "Why

is that not done?" I used to regret that I had not the privilege of being questioned so familiarly. I have now been disillusioned. Not only that, I have received an *upadēsa* (communication of an initiatory *mantra* or formula). Sri Bhagavan's voice seemed to say, "When I am everywhere in my fullness, how could you do *pradakshina* to me? Do you think that I am a stone image, that you should go round and round me as in a temple?"

20th April 1946

(42) *ABHAYAM SARVA BHŪTHĒBHYAHA*

(COMPASSION TOWARDS ALL)

At the time that Bhagavan was to go out in the morning today, the coolies who had been deputed to gather mangoes from the tree near the steps towards the mountain, began beating it with sticks to knock down the mangoes, instead of climbing the tree and picking them one by one. In the course of the beating the mango leaves also were falling down in heaps. Hearing the sound of the beating even while seated on the sofa, Bhagavan sent word through his attendants not to do so and when he went out as usual, saw mango leaves lying in heaps. Unable to bear the cruel sight, he began saying in a harsh tone to the coolies, "Enough of this! Now go! When you are to gather the fruit, do you have to beat the tree so that the leaves fall off? In return for giving us fruit, is the tree to be beaten with sticks? Who gave you this work? Instead of beat-

ing the tree, you might as well cut it to the roots. You need not gather the fruit. Go away !”

Bhagavan's voice, which was like thunder, reverberated in the ears of all who were there and made them tremble with fear. The bamboos that were aloft were brought down and placed on the ground. The coolies stood with folded hands like images. They had no words to speak. When I saw the personification of kindness towards nature in an angry mood, my heart beat violently and my eyes were full of tears. Can one who is so much moved by the falling of the leaves of a tree, bear pain in the minds of human beings ? Bhagavan Ramana is indeed *karunāpoorna sudhābdhi*, the ocean filled with the nectar of compassion.

By the time he returned from the *Gosāla* side, the devotees had gathered the leaves into a heap, and begged him to forgive the fault. Bhagavan went into the hall, saying, “How cruel ! See how many beatings were showered on the tree, how big is the heap of leaves ! Oh !”

When Bhagavan was in Virūpāksha cave, Echamma, who installed a picture of Bhagavan and a picture of Seshadri Swami in her house, decided to do *pūja* with a lakh of tender leaves, and began it after informing Bhagavan about it. By the time she had finished the *pūja* with fifty thousand leaves, summer had set in, and she could not gather any more leaves even though she wandered all over the mountain. She got tired, and went to Bhagavan to ventilate her grievances. Bhagavan said, “If you cannot get the leaves, why not pinch yourself and do *pūja* ?” She said, “Oh, but that will be painful !” Bhagavan said, “If it pains you to pinch your body, is it not painful to the tree when you cut its leaves ?” She turned pale and asked,

“Why did you not tell me earlier, Swami?” He replied, “When you know that pinching the body is painful, why did you not know that the tree will be equally pained if you rob it of its leaves? Do I have to tell you that?”

That tender leaves should not be cut from trees is also stated in the sloka in *Devikālottara Stotra* in *Jnānāchāra, Vichārapadalam*, given below :

न मूलोत्पातनं कुर्यात् पत्रच्छेदं विवर्जयेत् ।

भूतपीडां न कुर्वीत पुष्पानां च निकृन्तनम् ॥

(Roots should not be pulled out. Leaves should not be pinched. Living beings should not be harmed. Flowers should not be plucked.)

23rd April 1946

(43) THAT WHICH IS, IS ONLY ONE

This afternoon a Muslim youth came here with two or three friends. From the way he sat down, I felt that he wanted to ask some questions. After a while he began asking the questions in Tamil. “How can one know Allah? How can one see HIM?” That was the purport of his questions. As usual Bhagavan said, “If you first find out who it is that is questioning, you can then know Allah.”

The young man said again, “If I meditate on this stick, thinking it is Allah, can I see Allah? How am I to see Allah?” “That real thing which is never destructible, is known as Allah. If you first find out the truth

about yourself, the truth about Allah will present itself," said Bhagavan. That was enough to dispose of him. He went away with his friends. Soon after they left, Bhagavan remarked to those by his side, "See, he wants to see Allah! Is it possible to see with these eyes? How could these eyes perceive?"

Yesterday a Hindu asked Bhagavan, "Is *Omkāra* a name of Ishwara?" Bhagavan said, "*Omkāra* is Ishwara, Ishwara is *Omkāra*. That means *Omkāra* itself is the *swarūpam* (the real self). Some say that the *swarūpam* itself is *Omkāra*. Some say that it is *Sakthi*, some say it is *Ishwara*, some say it is Jesus, some say it is Allah. Whatever name is given, the thing that is there, is only one."

Four or five days back, recalling a reply given to somebody's question, a devotee, residing in the Asramam, asked Bhagavan thus: "You said that *Ānanda* also gets dissolved; if so, what is the meaning of *dhyānam*, *samādhi* and *samādhānam*?"

Bhagavan said, "What is meant by *laya*? It should not stop with *Ānanda*. There must be some one to experience that. Should you not know that some one? If you do not know that someone, how could it be *dhyānam*? If the one that experiences is known that one is the self. When one becomes oneself that becomes *dhyānam*. *Dhyānam* means one's own self. That is *samādhi*. That is also *samādhānam* (perfect absorption of thought into the one object of meditation, i.e., the Supreme Spirit)".

27th April 1946

(44) THE BLACK COW

For the last three days the black cow in the *Gosāla* was suffering from some ailment, so she was tied to a tree near the shed built for the calves. Though she was suffering for three days, Bhagavan did not go to that side to see her. Yesterday she was in the last throes of death. Though she was suffering like that since morning, she did not breathe her last till 5 p.m. Bhagavan got up at 4-45 p.m. to go behind the *Gosāla* as usual. While returning, he turned towards the place where that cow was, stopped at the shed constructed for the calves and watched for a while her agony. As Bhagavan is the embodiment of kindness, it is natural that his heart should melt with pity. He favoured the cow with a look of deliverance from bondage, came back and sat as usual on the sofa.

After his benign look fell upon her, the *jiva* remained in the body for only five minutes. It was waiting and waiting for his benevolent look and as soon as that was obtained, it left the body. It is said that if a person can think of God at the time of death, that person gets freed from bondage. How fortunate should that cow be that she could get freed from bondage at the time of her death by Bhagavan's holy and benevolent look! Bhagavan told us several times that though several animals suffered for days together, it never used to occur to him to look at them and that in some cases, it suddenly occurred to him to look at them in their agonies of death. He added that in such cases, the animals pass away peacefully immediately after. I have just seen an instance of this.

2nd May 1946

(45) *PARĀTPARA RŪPAM*
(THE SUPREME BEING)

This afternoon some Andhras came with their ladies, and went away after staying for some time in Bhagavan's presence. One of them asked Bhagavan with folded hands, "Swami, we have come here after going on pilgrimage to Rameswaram and other places and worshipping the gods there. We want to know from you what *parātpara rūpa* is like. Please, I pary you, let us know."

With a smile Bhagavan said, "Is that so? It is the same. You yourself are saying that you have come after worshipping all the gods. Though He is one in all, that which is above all is *parātpara rūpam*. It means "above everything" (The Supreme Being). As you have seen all those temples, it has occurred to you to wonder what that Supreme Being is which is the source of all these gods. Would this question arise if you had not seen them all?" On looking at Bhagavan's face, it appeared as if the Supreme Being was dancing on his face. That glow on his face, beaming with happiness must be seen! Though those words were not understood by that young man, he was satisfied with the benevolent look of Bhagavan and so went away with his people after prostrating to Bhagavan.

After they went away, Bhagavan said enthusiastically to a devotee sitting nearby, "See, the real meaning is in their words themselves. *Parātpara rūpam* means the Supreme Being which is highest of the high. The meaning of the question itself is not known. If the meaning is known, the reply is in the question itself."

11th May 1946

(46) THE ETHICS OF SOCIAL EXISTENCE

Yesterday morning at 9-45, when Bhagavan went out and returned to the hall a dog which was living in the Asramam was barking at another dog, which had come there and which it was trying to drive away. While the people there were trying to pacify the Asramam dog, Bhagavan said in a lighter vein, "it is usual everywhere for those who come earlier to exercise authority over those who come later. This dog is trying likewise to exercise its authority." So saying, he looked at the Asramam dog, and said, "Why do you bark? Go away." It went away accordingly, as if it had understood his words.

This morning at 10 o'clock Dr. Anantanarayana Rao and his wife Ramabai brought some good mangoes from their garden and while giving them to Bhagavan; said, "The monkeys are taking away all the mangoes. So we hurriedly plucked these and have brought them here." Bhagavan said smilingly, "Oh, is that so. So the monkeys are going there also?" Then looking at all the others there, he said, "Yes, monkeys take the fruits one by one while people take them all in one lot. If asked why, they say it is their right. If what the monkeys do is petty theft, what people do is regular looting. Without realising that, they drive away the monkeys," said Bhagavan.

28th May 1946

(47) WHICH IS THE VEHICLE ?

Our brothers's children, Swarna and Vidya, wanted to see Adi Annamalai Temple, Durgamba Temple and others and so we set out yesterday morning after obtaining Bhagavan's permission. As the summer had already set in, I was afraid these young children of 10 and 12 years might not be able to walk in the hot sun and so engaged a bullock cart. On seeing the cart, other children of the same age and even younger ones, also started out with us. We went round the hill by way of *pradakshina*, saw all the places of interest and returned by about 11-30. As we came into the hall at 3 p.m. Bhagavan enquired of me, "At what time did you come back?" When I said it was 11-30 a.m., Bhagavan asked, "Were these children able to walk it?" I told him we went round in a bullock cart. Bhagavan jocularly said, "Oh, I see. You went in a cart. Who gets the *punya* (religious merit), the cart or the bullock or these children?" I could not give a reply. Bhagavan said: "This body itself is a cart. Another cart for this cart! A bullock to pull this cart! For a work done like this (going round the hill), people say, 'We have done it.' Everything is like that. People come by train from Madras and say, 'We have come'. It is the same thing with the body. For the self, the body is a cart. The legs do the work of walking and people say, 'I walked, I came.' Where does the self go? The self does not do anything but appropriates to itself all these acts." So saying, he enquired, "Did they walk at least some distance?" I said that they walked up to Gautama Asramam, doing *bhajan*, but could

LIBRARY

No.

Sri Ramanasramam

Sri Sri Sri Anandamayee Ashram
BANARAS. 85

not walk further because of the hot sun. "That is something. They walked at least some distance," said Bhagavan.

You know, Vidya is a mischievous child. Ever since she came, she has been asking a lot of questions about Bhagavan. "Won't Bhagavan *Thāthā* come anywhere? Why not?" Not satisfied with my replies, on the 24th she herself asked Bhagavan why he did not go anywhere. As you are aware, Bhagavan is very pleased with the words of little children. Looking at her affectionately, he said, "You want to take me to your place? That is your idea, isn't it? That is all very well but if I go anywhere, all these people will also come with me and on the way, ever so many people will invite me to their places. If I don't go, will they agree to that? No. They will take me there bodily. From there, some more people will start. Can you take them all with you? Not only these people. If I move out, the whole of Arunachala itself may start. How can you take it away? See, I have been kept in this jail. Even if you take me away, someone will catch me on the way and again put me in some other jail. What can I do? How can I come, tell me? Will all these people let me go? What do you say?" Vidya could not reply. From that time onwards, he used to tell people, "This child is inviting me to her place."

Yesterday, having heard that the two children were leaving for their native place that day, and seeing Vidya standing near the doorway, Bhagavan, while going out at 9-45 a.m. caught hold of her hand and said, "Child! Will you take me also with you? Tie me up firmly, put me in a cart and take me away." Before leaving, Vidya took Bhagavan's photos to him and showed them. As soon as he saw the photos, Bhagavan said, "So you are taking me

away. Tie me firmly and throw me in the cart." Every one present felt happy, and Vidya in her great joy, frolickingly began saying, "Yes, I am taking away Bhagavan *Thāthayyā*."

Who? Where can one go? Which is the cart? Which is the jail? If the mountains themselves move, how can they be stopped? All these are problems!

3rd June 1946

(48) *JAPA, TAPA AND THE LIKE*

Yesterday a gentleman came here — a devout Brahmin. From his words and from the rosary of *rudrākshas* round his neck, it was clear that he was practicing *mantra japa*. He said that he had *darshan* of Bhagavan once before in Virupaksha Cave. Today, going up to Bhagavan, he asked, "Swami, can a continuous *japa* of *Panchākshari* or *Tārakam* absolve one from sin such as drinking alcoholic liquor and the like?" "What exactly is your idea?" asked Bhagavan. The Brahmin again asked pointedly, "Even though people commit adultery and theft and take alcoholic drinks and so on, can their sins be wiped out by doing *japa* with the *mantras* mentioned above? Or will the sins stick to them?"

"If the feeling 'I am doing *japa*' is not there, the sins committed by a man will not stick to him. If the feeling 'I am doing the *japa*' is there, why should not the sin arising from bad habits stick on?" said Bhagavan. "Will not this *punya* (result of virtuous acts) extinguish that

pāpam (result of those sinful acts) ? ” asked the Brahmin. “ So long as the feeling, ‘ I am doing ’ is there, one must experience the results of one’s acts, whether they are good or bad. How is it possible to wipe out one act with another ? When the feeling that ‘ I am doing ’ is lost, nothing affects a man. Unless one realises the Self, the feeling ‘ I am doing ’ will never vanish. For one who realises the Self where is the need for *japam* ? Where is the need for *tapas* ? Owing to the force of *Prārabhdha* life goes on, but he does not wish for anything. *Prārabhdha* is of three categories, *Ichha*, *Anichha*, and *Parēchha* (personally desired, without desire and due to others’ desire). For him who has realised his Self, there is no *Ichha-Prārabhdha*. The two others, *Anichha* and *Parēchha* remain. Whatever he does is for others only. If there are things to be done by him for others, he does them but the results do not affect him. Whatever be the actions that such people do, there is no *punya* and no *pāpa* attached to them. But they do only what is proper according to the accepted standard of the world — nothing else,” said Bhagavan.

Though Bhagavan told the questioner that for him who realises his self there is no *Ichha-Prārabhdha* but only *Anichha* and *Parēchha-Prārabhdha*, his usual views about the *Prārabhdhas* may be found in his work “ *Unnathi Nalupadhi* ”.

“ The Jnani does not have present, future and *prārabhdha karma* ; to say that *prārabhdha* remains, is only a reply to a question. Just as one of the wives cannot remain unwidowed when the husband dies, so also the three *Karmas* cannot remain when the *karta* is gone.”

(The Forty Verses — Supplement, verse 33)

9th June 1946

(49) WHAT IS SAMĀDHI ?

Bhagavan spent a lot of time this afternoon freely conversing with devotees about many matters, and in between teaching them Advaita. Seeing that the conversation was going on without end, a new arrival got up and asked, "Bhagavan, when do you go into *samādhi*?" All the devotees burst into laughter. Bhagavan also laughed. After a while, he said, "Oh, is that your doubt? I will clear it, but first tell me what exactly is the meaning of *Samādhi*? Where should we go? To a hill or to a cave? Or to the sky? What should *samādhi* be like? Tell me," asked Bhagavan.

Poor man, he could not say anything and so sat down quietly. After a while, he said, "Unless the movement of the *indriyās* and limbs stops, there cannot be *samādhi*, they say. When do you go into that *samādhi*?" "I see, that is what you want to know. You think, 'What is this? This Swami is always speaking. What *jñāni* is he?' That is your idea? It is not *samādhi* unless one sits cross-legged in *padmāsana*, with folded hands and stops breathing. There must also be a cave near about. One must go in and out of it. Then people will say, 'This is a great Swami.' As for me, they begin doubting and say, 'What Swami is this, who is always talking to his devotees and has his daily routine? What can I do? This happened once or twice even before. People who had originally seen me at Gurumūrtham cave and then saw me at Skandāśramam, talking to all people and partaking in normal activities, said to me with great anxiety, 'Swami, Swami, please give us *darshan*

in your previous state.' Their impression was that I was getting spoiled. What can I do? At that time (while in Gurumūrtham) I had to live like that. Now I am obliged to live like this. Things happen the way they have to. But in their view, it is enough if one does not eat or talk. Then saintliness, *swāmitvam*, comes on automatically. That is the delusion people have," said Bhagavan.

5th July 1946

(50) WHAT IS *SARVAM* (EVERYTHING) ?
(HOW TO SEE EVERYTHING AS ONE'S SELF) ?

For the last three days, a young man who came recently has been worrying Bhagavan with a number of questions without rhyme or reason. Bhagavan was explaining patiently everything in great detail. This morning at 9 o'clock he started again. "You say everything is one's own self? How is one to get that feeling that everything is one's own self?" With a voice indicating displeasure Bhagavan said, "What is meant by everything? Who are you? If you tell me who you are, then we can think of everything. You have been asking me so many questions all these days but you have not yet replied to my questions as to who you are. First tell me who you are and then ask me what is everything (*sarvam*). Then I shall reply. If only you try to find out who you are, these questions will not arise. If you don't try that and go on thinking of what next to ask, this will go on like an endless flow. There is no limit to it. There will be *shānti*, peace of mind, only

if one practises self-enquiry and finds out the truth : if, instead, one enquires about this and that, what is the use ? It is all wasted effort."

The young man said again, "To know one's own self, should there not be a Guru and *sādhana* ?" "Why do you want a Guru or *sādhana* ? You say you know everything. Why then a Guru ? You don't care to do what you are asked to do. What can a Guru do ? A Guru's help will be available only if you go the way he indicates. You talk of *sādhana*. For what purpose ? What type of *sādhana* ? How many questions ? One must go by one path. What is the use of running about with limitless doubts ? Will your appetite be satisfied by your eating food, or by others eating their food ? What is the use of wasting your time asking about those people and these people, or about that and this ? You forget your self and go round the sky and the earth, searching and enquiring 'What is happiness ?' You must first enquire 'Who am I that am going round and enquiring ?' If one thus enquires about one's own self, no other question will arise," said Bhagavan.

Meantime, another took up the questioning and asked, "How did the *jiva* acquire Karma ?" Bhagavan said, "First find out who *jiva* is and then we shall find out how Karma came. There is no knowledge as to what is the *jiva*. How did the *jiva* acquire Karma ? Is that Karma allied with *jiva* or is at a distance ? These are the thoughts. None of these doubts will occur if the mind that is so active outwardly, is made to look within."

,12th July 1946

(51) DEATH OF MADHAVASWAMY

About four days ago, i.e. in the morning of the 8th or 9th, I went to Bhagavan's presence at 7-30. As I got up after prostrating before him, Bhagavan said, "Madhava is gone." "Where to?" I asked, as he was in the habit of going away from the Asramam on pilgrimage now and then. Smilingly Bhagavan said, "Where to? To that place, leaving the body here." I was shocked and asked, "When?" "The day before yesterday at 6 p.m." replied Bhagavan, and looking at Krishnaswami, said, "Acharyaswami who was there came here and died, and the one who was here went there and died. Everything moves according to fate. For a long time Madhava had a desire that he should be independent and without anyone in authority over him. His desire has at last been fulfilled. Anyway he was a good man. Merely for fun when Acharyaswami who was in Kumbakonam passed away, I asked Madhava whether as there was no one in the Math, he would go? He took up the idea, went there and thus fulfilled his desire. See how things happen! When I wrote Telugu *Dvipada* and other verses in Malayalam script in a notebook, he used to read them well just like Telugu people. He had some Telugu '*Samskāra*'. He took away that notebook saying that he would be looking into it now and then. If it is there, tell them to bring it here. It was the same with Ayyaswamy. He took away a note book, saying that he would bring it back after reading it. He himself never came back. The same thing has happened with this man also." So saying he changed the topic. When they heard that a person who

had followed Bhagavan almost like his shadow for 12 years, and was extremely meek and gentle by nature, had passed away suddenly somewhere, there was no one in the Asramam who did not shed a tear.

Kunjuswami who had gone from here to supervise Madhava's burial ceremonies, came back this morning at 8 a.m. and after prostrating before Bhagavan said, "Madhavaswamy was wandering about in search of peace of mind but could not gain peace, and so he told people that he would not live any longer, and came to the Math at Kumbakonam. He had a sudden attack of diarrhoea for a day, and as he complained of difficult breathing while taking soda water, he was made to lie down. He never regained consciousness, according to what the people in the Math told me. They kept the corpse till I got there. It was not affected badly in any way even though three days had elapsed. I got it buried and have come back. I could not find the note-book anywhere."

After he left, Bhagavan said, looking at Krishnaswami, "Madhava was a good man. That is why we all feel sorry that he is dead. But instead of feeling sorry that he is dead, we should all be worried as to when we will pass away. A *jñāni* always looks forward to the time when he will be free from the bondage of the body and be able to throw it away. A person who carries a load for a wage always longs for the time when he could reach the destination. When the owner tells him on reaching the destination to put the load down, he feels greatly relieved and puts it down. In the same way, this body is a burden to a man of discrimination. He always feels that the other man is gone, and eagerly looks forward to his own exit from the body. If that little

thing called life is gone, four people are required to bear the burden of the body. When that life is in, there is no burden ; but when that is gone, there is nothing so burdensome as the body. For a body like this, *kāyakalpa Vratās* (rejuvenation processes) are undertaken with a desire to attain *moksha* (deliverance), with the body. With all that, such people too pass away sooner or later. There is no one who can remain in this body forever. Once a person knows the true state, who wants this temporary body ? One should wish for the time when he will be able to throw away this burden and go free. ”

Madhavaswami was a Malayalee. His birth place is a village near Palghat. He was a *bramachāri*. He came here about 15 years back, when he was only 20 years old and did service to Bhagavan. For some time past, he has had a desire to visit holy places, and so used to go away and come back frequently. When Acharyaswami, who was another devotee of Bhagavan, in charge of the Math which was built for him in Kumbakonam, came here some time back and passed away, Madhava went there as head of the Math and passed away within a short time.

22nd July 1946

(52) “ *ANĀRANEYĀM MAHATĪMAHEEYĀM* ”

(AN ATOM AMONG ATOMS AND A GIANT
AMONG GIANTS)

This morning at 10-30 Sonti Ramamurthi came with his wife, brother and some friends. At that time a devotee, reading some book, was saying to Bhagavan, “ In this book,

it is stated that we eat food and food eats us. How is that? That we eat food is correct. But what is meant by saying that food eats us?" and Bhagavan was silent.

After waiting silently for about 10 minutes Ramamurthi told Bhagavan that he came there mainly because his brother was anxious to see Bhagavan, that he himself had Bhagavan's *darshan* about ten years back and taking up the thread of the previous conversation of the devotee, remarked :

"All living beings are born, maintained and absorbed ultimately by *annam* (food) and so food is known as Brahman. That Brahman is all-pervasive. All things are its images and as that is known as *annam*, it is stated that *annam* eats us. Isn't that the meaning?" Bhagavan said, "yes".

He told Bhagavan several things about science, and his brother also spoke about science, atom bombs and the like, all in English. I do not know English; so I could not follow their conversation. But Bhagavan replied in Telugu. After hearing all that they were saying about science, Bhagavan said at last, "Certainly. But not one of these things is divorced from one's own self, is it? Everything comes after one's self. No one says he is not existent. Even an atheist would admit that he himself exists. So whatever comes must come from out of one's self and must resolve into it ultimately. There is nothing separate from one's self, in accordance with the principle in the *Sruti*, '*Anōraneeyām Mahatōmaṣeeyām*', (the Self is an atom among atoms and infinite among infinities)." Ramamurthi asked, "Where does the difference come between the atom and the infinite?" "It comes from the body itself," said Bhagavan. Ramamurthi asked, "How is it that we see so

Sri Ramanasramam

9/299

95

many forces in the world?" Bhagavan said: "The mind alone is the cause. It is the mind that makes you see so many different forces. When that is born, all else is also born. The five elements, and the forces beyond the elements, whatever they are, and the forces beyond others also take shape, once the mind is born. If the mind is dissolved, all the others also get dissolved. The mind is the cause of everything."

28th July 1946

(53) DREAMS : DELUSIONS

Sometime back a North Indian came here and stayed for some days. One afternoon at 3 o'clock, he came to Bhagavan and told his experiences through a Tamil devotee, thus: "Swami, I was sleeping in the guest house yesterday. You were there speaking to me in my sleep. After some time I woke up and even after that, you were speaking to me. What is that?" Bhagavan said, "You were sleeping, weren't you? Then with whom could you be speaking?" "Only with myself" he said. Everyone laughed.

"You say you were sleeping. How could there be any conversation with someone who is asleep? 'No, I was conversing,' you say. That meant that, even though the body was asleep, you were awake. Then find out who that 'you' is. After that we will consider the conversation during sleep," said Bhagavan. There was no reply at all. Looking at all the people with a kind look, he said, "There are only two things; creation and sleep. There is nothing if

you go to sleep. You wake up and there is everything. If you learn to sleep while awake, you can be just a witness. That is the real truth."

In the same manner, some time back Subbaramayya asked Bhagavan, "What is meant by *asparsa rūpam*?" "It means that a thing is visible but not tangible." "What is meant by *chhāyā rūpam*?" he again asked. "That is the same thing. It appears as a shadow. If you examine it, you will find nothing. Call it God, devil, dream, vision, inspiration or whatever you like. All this is there if there is someone to see it. If you find out who it is that sees, all these will not be there. That which is nothing, that which is the source of everything, is the Self. Without seeing his own self, what is the use of a man's seeing other things?" said Bhagavan.

Recently a person told Bhagavan that he had a friend who could see the limits of *sūkshma sakti* (subtle powers), that he had seen the limits of the subtle power of *mahā-purushās* (great souls), that among them Sri Aurobindo's subtle power-light extended to a distance of seven furlongs, that of Bhagavan's, he could see upto three miles, but could not see to what further distance it extended and that the power-light of Buddha and others had not extended to that much distance. Having heard him patiently till the very end, Bhagavan said with a smile, "please tell him that he should first look into this own subtlety before looking into the extent of the subtle powers of so many others. What is all this about the limits of subtle powers and examining them? If one looks into one's own self, all these silly ideas do not come up. To him who realises himself, all these are mere trifles."

6th August 1946

(54) PURE *BHAKTI* (DEVOTION) IS
REAL SERVICE

Today a devotee asked Bhagavan : "Swami, what is that story about myrobalams while you were on the hill ?" Bhagavan told us the following : "While I was in Virupaksha Cave, I used to eat one myrobalam every night to move the bowels freely. Once it so happened that there were none in stock. As Palaniswamy was thinking of going to the bazaar, I asked him to tell Sesha Iyer to send some myrobalams. He said he would do so as Sesha Iyer was on his way to the bazaar. The very next moment a devotee came from his village. He used to visit our place now and then. After staying with us for a while, he went out. A little later, Palaniswamy started to go to the bazaar. In the meantime, the devotee who had gone out, returned and said, 'Swami, do you want some myrobalams?' 'Give me one or two if you have them' I said. He brought a big bag and placed it opposite to me. When I asked him, 'Where are all these from?', he replied, 'Swami, after having your *darshan*, I went out in a cart, to a village nearby as I had some work there. Another cart had gone ahead of me laden with bags of myrobalams. One of the bags had a hole from which these myrobalams fell out. I picked them up and brought them here thinking that they might be of some use. Let them be here, Swami.' I took about two or three viss and returned the rest to him. Such things used to happen often. How many could we recollect ! When mother came and started cooking, she used to say that it would be good if there was an iron ladle. I would say, let us see. The next day or the day after that someone would bring five or

six ladles. It was the same thing with cooking utensils. Mother would say that it would be good if we had this or that article, and I would reply, 'Is that so?' and the same day or the next, such articles, ten instead of one, used to be received. Enough, enough of this! I felt. Who is to look after them? 'There were many such incidents,' said Bhagavan.

"What about the grapes?" asked the devotee. Bhagavan replied, "Yes, they also were being used for the same purpose as the myrobalams, whenever any one brought some and gave them to us. One day the stock of grapes got exhausted. Palaniswami asked if he could tell some one going to the shop to get them. I said that there was no hurry, and that he should not worry about it but should wait and see. That was all. Within a short time, the brother of Gambhiram Seshayya came there. There was a big packet in his hand. When asked what it contained, he said, 'grapes.' 'What! Just a little while ago, we were saying that our stock had run out. How did you come to know about it?' I asked. He said, 'How could I know about it, Swami? Before coming here, I felt that I should not come to you with empty hands, and so went to the bazaar. As it was Sunday, all the shops but one were closed. 'I am going to Bhagavan. What have you?' I asked the shopkeeper. He said he had only grapes and that they too had just arrived, so he packed them and gave them to me. I brought them. It is only just a while ago, Swami, that this thought occurred to me.' On comparing notes, it was found that the time coincided. That was a very common experience for Ayyaswami also. We used to think that it would be better if we had a certain article, and at the very same hour, he used to feel that the same article should be

taken to Bhagavan. If we asked him, 'how did you know about it?' Ayyaswami used to say, 'Swami, how could I know? It merely occurred to me that I should take a particular article to Bhagavan. I brought it and that is all. You say that you were thinking of the very same article at the time. Swami alone should know about such strange happenings.' Really, he used to keep his mind pure, and so whatever we thought about here used to mirror itself in his mind."

Should we be told specifically that we should keep our minds pure and without blemish? The life of Ayyaswami itself is an example of this, is it not?

8th August 1946

(55) *GURI* (CONCENTRATION) ALONE IS
THE GURU (THE PRECEPTOR)

Yesterday morning Yogi Ramayya questioned Bhagavan thus: "Swami, some disciples of Sai Baba worship a picture of him and say that it is their Guru; how could that be? They can worship it as God, but what benefit could they get by worshipping it as their Guru?" Bhagavan replied, "They secure concentration by that." The Yogi said, "That is all very well, I agree. It may be to some extent a *sādhana* in concentration. But isn't a Guru required to gain firmness for that concentration?" "Certainly, but after all, Guru only means *guri*, concentration" said Bhagavan. The Yogi said "How can a lifeless picture help in gaining that firmness? It requires a living Guru who

could show it in practice.. It is possible perhaps for Bhagavan to attain perfection without a living Guru but is it possible for people like myself ? ”

“That is true. Even so, by worshipping a lifeless portrait, the mind gets concentrated to a certain extent. That concentration will not become firm unless one knows about oneself by self-enquiry. For that enquiry, a Guru’s help is necessary. That is why the ancients say that the enquiry should not stop with mere initiation. However, even if it does, the initiation will not be without benefit. It will bear fruit some time or other. But there should be no ostentation in this initiation. If the mind is pure, all this will bear fruit ; otherwise, it goes to waste like a seed sown in barren soil,” said Bhagavan.

“ I don’t know, Swami. You may say that a hundred times or a thousand times. To be sure of one’s own progress, a living Guru like you is required. How can we give the status of a Guru to a lifeless portrait ? ” he said. With a smile on his face, Bhagavan said, “ Yes, yes, ” nodding his head and then kept silent. Brother, all I can say is that that smile and that silence rained pearls amongst us. What more can I write to you about it ?

10th August 1946

(56) *ŚIDDHĀS* (PEOPLE WITH SUPERHUMAN POWERS)

There was a talk in Bhagavan’s presence today about *siddhās*. Some people said, amongst other things, that someone had tried to attain *siddhi* and had succeeded. After

hearing them all patiently for a long time, Bhagavan said in a tone of annoyance : " You talk of *siddhās*. You say they attain something from somewhere. For that purpose they do *sādhana* and *tapas*. Is it not really a *siddhi* or attainment for us who are really formless to have got a body with eyes, legs, hands, nose, ears, mouth and to be doing something or other with that body ? We are *siddhās*. We get food, if we want food ; water, if we want water ; milk, if we want milk. Are not all these *siddhis* ? While we experience ever so many *siddhis* at all times, why do you clamour for more *siddhis* ? What else is required ? "

About two years back, when Manu Subedar, a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly and translator of the comment on the *Bhagavad Gita* by Jnaneswara, came to have *darshan* of Bhagavan, and asked Bhagavan during a conversation why it was that there were writings about *Siddha Purushās* in all books but none about *Sādhakās*, and whether there were any books about *Sādhakās*, Bhagavan said, " In *Bhakta Vijayam*, in Tamil, there is a conversation between Jnaneswara and Vithoba, his father. That is a discussion between a *Siddha* and a *Sādhaka*. The state of a *Sādhaka* can be seen in that conversation." So saying Bhagavan sent for a copy of *Bhakta Vijayam* from the Asramam Library, read out that portion himself and explained it in detail. On reaching home, Manu Subedar asked for a copy of the conversation. Bhagavan sent a copy after getting it translated into English. Manu Subedar added it as a supplement to the third edition of his *Jnaneswari*. Recently I translated that conversation into Telugu. You remember when you came here last full moon day, during some conversation, Bhagavan said that Jnaneswara was a *siddha* while Vithoba was a *sādhaka*. Hence it was named

"Siddha-Sādhaka Samvādam" — Conversation between a *siddha* and a *sādhaka*.

Bhagavan often says, "To know oneself and to be able to remain true to oneself, is *siddhi*, and nothing else. If one's mind is absorbed in the enquiry of self, the truth will be realised some time or other. That is the best *Siddhi*."

I give below an extract from the prose writings of Bhagavan regarding these *siddhis* in his "*Unnati Nalupaadhi*" * which bears this out :

"*Siddhi* is to know and realise that which is ever Real. Other *siddhis* are mere dream *siddhis*. Would they be true when one wakes up from one's sleep? Those who are wedded to truth and who had got freed from Maya, will they get deluded by them? Please understand." (No. 35 in *U. N.*)

11th August 1946

(57) **KARTHURĀGNAYĀ PRĀPYATHĒ PHALAM**

(FRUITS OF ACTIONS ARE ORDAINED BY
THE CREATOR)

About 10 months ago, Krishna Bhikshu wrote to me saying that he was thinking of gifting away his property to his brothers and then taking to sanyaṣa and going about the country, hoping thereby to get peace of mind, and that he

* Note : "*The Forty Verses*" on Reality or Existence, originally composed by Bhagavan in Tamil under the title "*Ulladu Narpadu*", are called differently in different language versions : "*Unnathi Nalubathi, Sad Vidya, Saddarshanam, Truth Revealed*, etc.

Sri Ramanasramam

163

was wondering what Bhagavan would say about it. I informed Bhagavan about this letter. Bhagavan first said, "Is that so? Has he finally decided?" and after a while remarked, "Everything happens according to each individual's Karma."

When I wrote to him about this, Krishna Bhikshu replied, "It is said that '*Karthurāgnayā Prāpyathe Phalam*, fruits of actions are ordained by the Creator.' What has become of the Creator?" I was disinclined to tell Bhagavan about this, and was considering what to write in reply. Meantime, one devotee asked Bhagavan, "In '*Karthurāgnayā Prāpyathe Phalam*' who is the *kartā*?" Bhagavan said, "*kartā* is Ishwara. He is the one who distributes the fruits to each person according to his Karma. That means He is *Saguna Brahman*. The real Brahman is without *guna*, *nirguna* (attributeless) and without motion. It is only *Saguna Brahman* that is named as Ishwara. He gives the *phala* (fruits) to each person according to his Karma (labours). That means that Ishwara is only an Agent. He gives wages according to the labour done. That is all. Without that *sakti* (power) of Ishwara, this Karma (action) will not take place. That is why Karma is said to be *jadam*, motionless. This is the meaning."

What else is the reply to the question of Krishna Bhikshu? So I wrote accordingly to him. With the powers of his sandals, Vikramarka went to Brahma Loka, the world of Brahma, whereupon Brahma, being pleased, told him to ask for a boon. Vikramarka said, "Lord, the *Sāstrās* loudly proclaim that when you create living beings you write on their foreheads their future life according to the results of their actions in past lives. Now you say that you will give

me a boon. Will you rub out what has already been written on my forehead, and write afresh? Or will you correct it by overwriting? What exactly is done?" Brahma was pleased at his intelligent question and said with a smile, "Nothing new is done now. That which was already pre-ordained according to the Karma of beings, comes out of my mouth. We merely say, 'Yes, we have given you the boon.' That is all. Nothing is given anew. Not knowing that, people do penances for boons at our hands. As you are an intelligent person, you have found out the secret. I am very happy." So saying he presented Vikramarka with *Brahmāstram* and sent him away. I remember having read this story in my younger days.

In the tenth Canto of *Bhāgavata*, the same idea was given in the exhortation given by Lord Krishna to Nanda to give up the performance of a sacrifice to God Indra.

12th August 1946

(58) *SARVA SAMATVAM*

(UNIVERSAL EQUALITY)

Last summer a Pandal was erected adjacent to the Hall so that it might be convenient for Bhagavan to sit outside in the evenings. Khus-khus thatties were tied west of the Pandal. Bhagavan's sofa used to be placed very near to them. The devotees used to sit there facing west, and Bhagavan used to sit facing south like Dakshinamurthy. We all used to sit opposite to his feet. When we look straight we get a *darshan* of the lotus feet of Bhagavan, while on

one side, we see the fine flower-garden, and on the other, we get a *darshan* of the summit of Arumachala. How can one speak of our good fortune ?

One evening at 4-45, after Bhagavan had gone on the hill for a while and before he returned, the personal attendants raised the khus-khus thatties, and tied them up as it was cloudy. Within 10 minutes of Bhagavan's return, there was bright sunshine. Though it was the evening sun, all were affected by the summer heat, and that caused a little discomfort. Unable to bear the sight of the sun's rays falling on the bare body of Bhagavan, one of the attendants, by name Vaikuntavas, slowly lowered the thatties that were behind Bhagavan. He thought Bhagavan had not noticed it. As *Vedapārāyana* (Vedic recitation) was going on at the time, Bhagavan appeared not to notice it and kept quiet.

After the recitation was over, Bhagavan said with some annoyance, "See the doings of these people ! They lowered only those thatties that were on my side. Perhaps they think that the others are not human beings ! The sun's heat should not touch Swami alone. It does not matter if it touches others ! Something special for Swami only ! Anyway, they are keeping up the prestige of Swami's position ! Poor chaps ! Perhaps according to them, one is not a Swami unless he is looked after like this ! Swami should not be exposed to sun or wind or light ; he should not move or talk ; he should sit with folded arms and with hands on a sofa. This is Swamy-hood. *Swāmitvam* is being upheld by singling me out amongst people for special treatment. "

The poor attendant got scared and tied up the thatties. The evening glare fell on Bhagavan and got mixed up with

the glare of his eyes.' The smoke from the Agarbathis, — incense sticks, — spread all round, having made friends with the cool breeze, and after bowing before Bhagavan's lotus feet, it spread over all the devotees slowly as if blown about by a fan.

13th August 1946

(59) *YATHĒCHHA* (AS ONE DESIRES)

During the early days of my arrival at the Asramam, there was a Vaisya boy living here, for the past 2 or 3 years, it would appear. His hair was matted without being attended to ; he used to get food from charitable householders, and sleep in the Arunachala Temple at night. His mother came to the Asramam and pressed him to return home, and so he ran away to Pandharpur. He was her only son. They had plenty of property. The boy was a sort of wandering beggar, a *bairāgi*, who would say that he did not want anything. When that mother related her woeful story to Bhagavan and sought his help, Bhagavan tried to prevail upon the boy, once or twice, to listen to the mother's words. He did not listen, but instead, he ran away.

He came again during last Ashada month. He always used to keep away from others, sitting in a corner of the hall. You may call it *sādhana* or whatever you like. His hair was no longer matted, but there was no other change in his routine or appearance. Bhagavan was observing him continuously. The boy did not speak. After 15 days, Rajagopala Iyer, who had retired from his job and come back to his library work in the Asramam, happened to come

to the hall and noticing the Vaisya boy, said to Bhagavan, "This boy appears to have returned from Phandarpur. His mother left her address, didn't she, requesting us to write to her in case he came back?"

Bhagavan said, "Yes, he has come back. That was about 15 days ago. I have been observing him. He does not speak. So, how then I could ask him 'What is it like, Pandharpur? Where is the *prasādam*, etc?'" We have to conduct ourselves according to the workings of the minds of others. We are in duty bound to adjust ourselves thus." People of intelligence examine their own minds. There is no knowing about the minds of the others. Bhagavan says that he has to act according to the desires and intentions of others! See what a great precept that is!

15th August 1946

(60) PROGRAMME

Niranjananandaswami who went to Madurai about a month ago, went to Madras from there about 4 or 5 days back. T. K. Doraiswami Iyer, who came from Madras, placed in Bhagavan's hands a programme for the Golden Jubilee celebrations on 1st September, drawn up in consultation with prominent people in Madras, and stood reverentially.

The details of the proposed programme, beginning at 7 in the morning and lasting till 7 in the evening were mentioned therein. High Court Judges and a number of eminent people were fixed up as speakers. Musiri Subramania Iyer and Budalur Krishnamurthy Sastry's music performance

and very many other items were in the programme. After reading it carefully, Bhagavan said with a smile, "Oh, what a crowded programme! Anyway, why should I worry? Let them do what they like. It is enough if I am given some time to go out. It is stated that all these big people will deliver lectures! What about? What is there to speak about? That which is, is *mowna* (silence). How can *mowna* be explained in words? In English, in Sanskrit, in Tamil, in Telugu, Oh, what an array of languages! Eminent people will speak in so many languages! All right! Why should I bother! It is enough if I am not asked to speak."

That devotee respectfully and with folded hands submitted that if Bhagavan desired that any of the items should be omitted, it would be done. "Oh, I see! Have I asked for any of these items, so that I could now object to any one of them? Do what you like. It is all a series of lectures. I will sit like this on the sofa. You may do whatever you like," said Bhagavan with a smile. "Yes, Swami, it is true. Who will be able to speak boldly in the presence of Bhagavan? Even so, all this is merely to express our joy at this great fortune we are privileged to have." So saying, the devotee bowed before Bhagavan and went away.

16th August 1946

(61) AN UNKNOWN DEVOTEE

Amongst the letters received by the Asramam today, there was one in English from an unknown devotee from Czechoslovakia. Seeing it Bhagavan affectionately told us

all about it and had it read out in the hall. The gist of it is : "Though my body is actually at a great distance from Arunachala, it is at the feet of Bhagavan from a spiritual viewpoint. I believe that fifty years will be completed by this 1st of September from the time when the little Ramana reached Tiruvannamalai. I seek your permission to celebrate the occasion in the belief that it is the real birthday of Bhagavan. I shall celebrate the festival with an endeavour to submerge my mind in the dust of the feet of Bhagavan with limitless devotion, faith and regard, and with my heart dwelling on Bhagavan's voice."

While all of us were expressing our delight on hearing the contents of that letter, Bhagavan said with a face radiant with benevolence, "We do not know who he is, and what his name and his native place are. He never came here. How has he managed to know that it is full fifty years since I came here? He has written a letter full of devotion. From what he has written, it looks as if he has read about my life and understood it. Devotees have been looking forward to an article from Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, but it has not been received so far. If received, it is the intention of these people to print it as the very first article. When S. Doraiswamy was asked, he said, 'Oh no. I cannot do it. I prefer to be silent.' D. S. Sastri also said the same thing. This letter has come unexpectedly. That is how things happen. These people are awaiting articles from others, especially from Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. See the peculiarity! Where is Czechoslovakia and where is Tiruvannamalai? What are we to say when a person who has never seen me has written thus?"

18th August 1946

(62) *EKAM AKSHARAM*

(ONE LETTER — THE ONE IMPERISHABLE)

A few days ago some Gujaratis who had come from Bombay purchased some Asramam books and Bhagavan's photos and showing them to Bhagavan, requested him to write his name on the books. "What name should I write?" asked Bhagavan. "Your name," said they. "What name have I?" said Bhagavan. When they said "Your name is Ramana Maharshi, is it not?", Bhagavan said smilingly, "Somebody said so. Really what is a name or a native place for me? I could write only if I had a name." The Gujaratis went away quietly without saying anything further.

In January 1945, you remember that you sent your book on Banking with a request that Bhagavan might be pleased to write in it the word 'OM' or 'SRI' and return it to you, and Bhagavan declined to do so. Instead, he gave me a piece of paper, on which he wrote a Telugu translation of a verse that he had written long back in Tamil when Somasundaraswami made a similar request. When I sent that slip of paper to you, you took it as an *upadēsa*, a precept from Bhagavan, and were overjoyed. Subsequently, he made some slight alterations therein. Later on Bhagavan translated it into Sanskrit as a *śloka* at the request of Muruganar as follows :—

एकमक्षरं हृदि निरंतरम् ।

भासते स्वयं लिख्यते कथम् ।

meaning, "The one imperishable which is self-luminous is in the Heart at all times. How to write it?"

I was reminded of all this when the Gujaratis mentioned above made a similar request and got a refusal.

About ten months ago, Pantu Lakshminarayana Sastri, Telugu Pandit, Maharajah's College, Vizianagaram, came here. After praising Bhagavan with verses composed extempore, he appealed to Bhagavan thus: "Please let me have something to commemorate this event and bless this poor soul." "What shall I give?" asked Bhagavan. "Anything you please; just an *akshram* (letter) by way of *upadēsa*," he said. Bhagavan said, "How can I give that which is 'akshara'?" and so saying he looked at me. I said, "It will perhaps do if you tell him about the *sloka* 'Eṣamaksharam.'" Sastri asked, "What is that *sloka*?" I read out that *sloka* first. "Where is that *Dwipada*?" asked Bhagavan. I read out that too. Sastri was overjoyed as if he had got a great treasure, and copied both the *sloka* and the *Dwipada*. When I told him about the circumstances under which those two were written, he felt very happy and went away after bowing before Bhagavan. I remembered all this when Bhagavan was saying to the Gujaratis, "What native place have I and what name have I?" Not only this. I was reminded of a song which mother used to sing while engaged in her domestic work, the meaning of which is somewhat as follows:—

"Rāmanāmam is the wide universe which has no name or body or work. It has a lustre surpassing the moon, the sun and the fire."

Ramana's name also is just like that!

—

19th August 1946

(63) CONTENTMENT

Bhagavan told Rajagopala Iyer to bind into the form of books the four copies of proofs of the Tamil work *Chat-varavimsath* which had been recently received. By the time I went there in the afternoon at 2-30 p.m. the books were ready for the outer cover to be put on. Showing the copies to the people around, Bhagavan said laughingly to Vaikuntavas who was by his side, "See, if we make good use of these proofs, we will have four copies of the book. How else could we get four copies? Who would give them to us? We should have to buy them at the book-stall. Where would we get the money?" We were all amused, and Vaikuntavas laughed. "Why do you laugh? Am I doing a job, and earning a salary of several hundreds every months? Or am I doing business and earning lacs? Where should I get money? What independence have I? If I am thirsty, I must ask you for water. If I went to the kitchen, instead and asked, they would say, 'Oh, this Swami has started exercising authority over us'. I have to keep my mouth shut. What independence have we?" said Bhagavan.

What other intention can he have than to administer a mild rebuke to all when he talks like this, though he is independent of everything in this world? Not only this. We always act freely according to our wishes. We ask for this and for that and become enslaved to desires without any restrictions. We achieve our desires by asking or ordering. Bhagavan deprecates not only the use of authority in such matters, but even obtaining such things by asking. There was another instance. Two or three years ago, as I

entered the hall one morning, Bhagavan was saying as follows in reply to several questions which Krishnaswami was asking :—

“When I was in Virupaksha cave, Sundaresa Iyer used to go out into the town for *bhiksha* and bring us food. At times, there used to be no curry or anything of that sort in that food. There used to be many people to eat while the food obtained was limited. What were we to do? I used to mix it into a paste and pour hot water over it to make it like gruel, and then give a glassful to each, and take one myself. Sometimes we all used to feel that it would be better if we had at least some salt to mix with it. But where was the money to buy salt? We should have had to ask someone for it. If once we began to ask for salt, we would feel like asking for dhal in the same breath, and when we asked for dhal, we would feel like asking for *pāyasam* and porridge, also. So we felt that we should not ask for anything, and drank the gruel as it was. We used to feel extremely happy over such diet. As the food was *sātvic*, without any excess of taste of any kind, because there was not even salt in it, not only was there happiness for this body, but there was also great peace for the mind.”

“Is salt also one of those things that stimulates *rajas*, (passion)?” I asked. “Yes. What doubt is there? Is it not said so in one of the *granthās* (books)? Wait, I will look it up and tell you,” said Bhagavan. “Isn’t it enough if Bhagavan says so? Why a *grantha*?” I said.

Not only do we not give up salt, but we always feel that chillies also are necessary for taste. That is how we have our rules and regulations about our eating habits. Great souls eat to live and serve the world, while we live to eat. That is the difference. If we eat to live, there is

no need to think of taste. If we live to eat, the tastes are limitless. And for those tastes, we undergo ever so many trials and tribulations.

19th August 1946

(64) *ĀTMA PRADAKSHINA*
(GOING ROUND THE SELF)

One morning last May, Sundaresa Iyer, who used to beg food for Bhagavan while in Virupaksha cave, came and bowed before him. Bhagavan asked him, "Did you go round the hill by way of *pradakshina*?" "No," said the devotee. Looking at me, Bhagavan said, "Last night when people were going out for *giri pradakshina* because of the moonlight, he also started to go. But he felt he could not complete the round. When they were starting out after telling me, he went round me quickly. When I asked him why all this, he said, 'I am afraid I cannot go round the hill. So I have gone round Bhagavan.' 'Go round yourself. That will be *Ātma pradakshina*,' I said." So saying he began laughing.

"It means that he has done what Vinayaka once did," said one devotee. "What is that story?" asked another devotee. Then Bhagavan began telling it: "Once upon a time, Lord Parameswara wanted to teach a lesson to His Son Lord Subrahmanya who fancied himself to be a great sage; so Parameswara sat on the top of Mount Kailasa with Parvati, with a fruit in his hand. Seeing the fruit both Ganapathi and Subrahmanya asked their Father, Parameswara for it. Then Ishwara said, that He would give the

fruit to whoever of them got back first after going round the whole world. With self-confidence and pride that he would win the race, Subrahmanya started immediately riding on his favourite mount, the peacock, and began going at a fast pace, frequently looking behind to assure himself that his elder brother Ganapathi was not following. What could poor Ganapathi do, with his huge belly? His *vāhanam* (mount) was after all a mouse. So he thought it was no good competing with Subrahmanya in the race round the world, and went round Parvati and Parameswara, bowed before them and claimed the reward. When they asked him whether he had gone round the world, he said, "All the worlds are contained within you; so if I go round you, it is as good as going round the world." Pleased with his reply, Parameswara gave him the fruit and Ganapathi sat there eating it.

"By the time Subrahmanya finished going round the world in full confidence that he would be the winner, and arrived at the starting point, he found Ganapathi seated before Parvati and Parameswara and eating the fruit. When he asked Parameswara to give him the fruit for winning the race, Ishwara said, 'There it is, your elder brother is eating it.' When he asked his father how that could be fair, Ishwara explained to him all that had happened. Subrahmanya then realised his vanity in thinking that he was a great sage, bowed before his parents, and asked to be pardoned. That is the story. The significance is that the ego which goes round like a whirlwind must get destroyed, and must get absorbed in *Ātma*. That is *Ātma Pradakshina*," said Bhagavan.

20th August 1946

(65) NARAKĀSURA — DIPĀVALI

Ramachandra Iyer came here from Madras recently. One day he was seated in the hall going through an old notebook and correcting some dates and numbers in it. Seeing that, Bhagavan asked what it was. He replied, "This is an old notebook written by Bhagavan long back. I am looking into the numbers and dates in it, and entering them in the printed book." "Give it to me," Bhagavan said, and taking it and turning over the pages, said to me, "There are some *Dipāvali padyams* (verses) in it. Have you heard them?"

When I said I had not, he read them out and gave the meaning thereof as follows : "He is Narakāsura (a demon) who feels attached thinking that he is the body. That attachment to the body itself is a *Naraka* (hell). The life of a person who has that attachment, even if he be a Maharajah, is hellish. Destroying the attachment to the body, and the self shining by itself as Self is *Dipāvali*. That is the idea contained in those verses." I asked, "Are all these verses in *Nool Thirattu*?" * Bhagavan said, "These were all composed extempore on the spur of the moment from time to time. Why include all these in that book?"

After the first publication of the book, these verses were read out in Bhagavan's presence, and he asked, "Do you know why I wrote those verses?" When I said that

* NOTE : "*Nool Thirattu* is the title of the book in Tamil containing all the verses, songs and prose writings of Bhagavan. '*The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*' contains the English translations of these. Both these books have been published by Sri Ramanasramam.

I did not know, he said, "Is that so? One *Dipāvali* day, Muruganar wanted me to write something about *Dipāvali*. 'Why don't you write? Why should I?' I asked. He said that he would also write if I did. I agreed, and wrote these verses. I did not write anything without reason. There is a story behind every verse that I wrote." So saying he showed me the verses (in Tamil). I give them below with the meaning :—

Vritam :

நரகுடல் நானு நரகுலகு ஆளும்
நரகனெங் கென்று சாவி ஞானத்திகிரியால்
நரகனைக் கொன்றவன் ஞாந னன்றே
நரக சதுர்த்தசி நற்றின மாமே.

Meaning : He is the king of hell who says that he is the body which is hell itself. He is Narayana who ascertains who Naraka is, and destroys him with His vision of wisdom, *Jnāna Drishti*. That is the auspicious day of *Narakachathurdasi*.

Vempa :

நரக உருவா நடலையில் வுடல
கிரக மகமெனவே கெட்ட—நரகனும்
மாயா வியைநாடி மாய்த்துத்தா னுயொளிர்த
தீபா வளியாம் தெளி.

Meaning : The false belief that this hell-like house called body is me, is Naraka himself. To destroy that false belief and let the self shine as Self, is *Dipāvali*."

21st August 1946

(66) FEAST AND FUN

Yesterday afternoon, I went to the hall a little later than usual. I believe it was 3 p.m. At the request of the devotees, Bhagavan was relating some incidents from his life on the hill. He was telling them how, when he was in Virupaksha cave, they had at first a mud pot for bringing food, then an aluminium vessel, then a brass one, and then a tiffin carrier; how the vessels accumulated one by one like this and how the devotees quietly started cooking without heeding his protests. Bhagavan told us another incident also, with a smile on his face. "Once, when I was in Virupaksha cave, Rangaswami Iyengar, Gambiram Seshayya, a Vaisya and a Reddi happened to be there. One day they all felt like cooking food and started doing so enthusiastically. Every one of them had the *yajnopaveetam* (sacred thread), except the Reddi. 'Why should he not have it?' they thought, and put one on him. That was great fun for all of them and they enjoyed the feast with that fun," said Bhagavan. Rajagopala Iyer asked, "Was it while you were there that grandmother came?" "Yes, she came while we were there, and said that she would cook her food. We told her that she could do so in the small cave nearby. She agreed and started cooking, and said to me, 'Venkatarama, I am cooking today. You should not therefore take any other food.' I said 'Yes' and after she left, I ate with the others as usual. It was some distance between this cave and the other one, and so how could she know? After she had cooked, I ate that food also. She really thought I had not eaten anything else except the food she cooked." He continued, "We had a grandfather

amongst our relatives. He used to abuse everyone. Even so, every one used to invite him so as to enjoy the fun of his abusive language. That was because he was good natured and did not mean ill to anybody. He came to see me while I was in Virupaksha cave. Soon after he came, he said jocularly, 'What! Venkataraman! It seems you have become a big Swami! Have you grown horns on your head?' It was when mother was away in Kasi that all this happened." It was really interesting to hear Bhagavan narrating these incidents with suitable modulations in his voice, and appropriate gestures.

22nd August 1946

(67) *ARPANA* (OFFERING)

A devotee who has been a regular visitor here for a long time came a week back with a copy of the Tamil book *Thiruvāimozhi* and began talking to Bhagavan about Vaishnava traditions. It seems he recently received *Samāsrayanam* (Asylum in the Lord). When he said that, Bhagavan began relating his earlier experiences as follows :

"When I was on the hill, some Vaishnavaites used to come there to see me. There are, as you know, two sections amongst Vaishnavites, *Vadakalai* and *Thenkalai*. I used to speak to these visitors in accordance with their respective traditions, as I lose nothing by doing so. When, however, they thought that I was on their side and wanted me to have *Samāsrayanam*, I declined. They believe that no one will be permitted into *Vaikuntam* (Heaven) unless he is duly initiated. I used to ask them, 'Show me even one person

who has gone to *Vaikuntam* with his body.' According to their traditions, they do not accept *Sāyujyam* — absorption into the deity. They say, 'Sri Maha Vishnu is in Heaven, *Vaikuntam*. Released souls sit around him and serve him.' How will all find accommodation there? Perhaps they sit close together shoulder to shoulder and leg to leg? They alone should know.⁹ Not only that. It seems there is a *mantra* which declares that they surrender their all to Guru at the time they receive *Samāśrayanam*. It is enough if the *mantra* is recited, and a *dakshina* (offering or donation) is given to the Guru. The surrender is over, and it does not matter whatever is done afterwards; a seat is reserved for them in *Vaikuntam*. What more is needed? That is the opinion of some of them. It is mere delusion to think of *arpana* (offering), so lightly. *Arpana* means that the mind gets merged in the self and becomes one with it. It means that it should become devoid of all *vāsanās*. And that will not come about unless there is self-effort and God's Grace. God's force cannot get hold of you and drag you into itself unless you surrender completely. But where is the question of our surrendering? The self itself is to be surrendered. Until one can accomplish that, one should go on struggling and trying unceasingly. It is only after struggling and trying again and again that one may, finally, succeed in the achievement. Once you achieve, there is no going back. That is the proper course. What is the use of merely repeating the word *arpana*, *arpana*? Except that you give some money while repeating the word *arpana*, what is the effect on the mind? In this *Thiruvāimozhi* itself there are some songs in the Advaitic cult sung by some devotees after attaining Self-realisation. Nammālwār is one such devotee. He sang that, in the Vaishnavite spirit, a

mother praised her daughter who attained Self-realisation in a form that looked like condemnation. 'The gist of those songs is, 'This child says, I am Siva, I am Vishnu, I am Brahma, I am Indra, I am the sun and I am the five elements, I am everything! It is that Vishnu who sits on her head and makes her talk thus; otherwise she would not have these aberrations. It is that Vishnu who has changed her thus.' That is the purport of these songs." So saying, Bhagavan had those songs read out and explained the meaning.

After that, he explained to us about Visishtādvaita : "When some devotees sang in terms of Advaita, some commentators twisted the meaning, interpreting it in terms of Visishtādvaita. That is all; it is nothing else. That is also the opinion of all the ancients. After all, what exactly is meant by Visishtādvaita? That which is *Visishta* (distinguished) and best is Vishnu. That is Ishwara, Sadasiva, Brahma and all. That which is, is only One. Some Vaishnavites give it a name and a shape and do not admit that there could be any *Sāyujyam* (absorption in the Supreme Being) except by way of living in the same world (*Salōkyam*), in the same vicinity (*Sameepyam*), and the same form (*Sarūpyam*) as the Supreme Being. They say, *arpana*, *arpana* (offering, offering). How can there be *arpana* unless there is a thing called 'I'? Complete surrender cannot come about unless one knows who one is. If you come to know that, you will realise that what remains is only one thing. The mind which is the 'I' submits of its own accord. And that is the real *arpana* (surrender)," said Bhagavan.

23rd August 1946

(68) *SĀDHANA-SĀKSHĀTKĀRAM*
(THE WAY AND THE GOAL)

The day before yesterday a learned man who came from Madras, began at 3 p.m. to question Bhagavan thus : "Was there a period at any time when Bhagavan did *Sādhana* ?" Bhagavan said, "*Sādhana* ? *Sādhana* for what ? What is there to do *sādhana* for ? Sitting like this is itself *sādhana*. I used to sit like this always. I used to close my eyes then ; now I keep them open. That is the only difference. What is now, was then also. What was there then, is also here now. *Sādhana* is necessary only if there is a thing other than 'I', Self. *Sādhana* is required only for one who does not look towards the Self which is permanent, but is deluded by looking at the body etc. which are transitory and delusive ; but not for one who sees the Self and so does not see anything else different. And what else is *sādhana* for ?"

Someone asked, "Then why is it that many works say that no one can attain *jñāna* without a Guru ?" Bhagavan said, "Yes. For those who, because of the action of their minds, are deluded into believing that they are the bodies, a Guru and *sādhana* are necessary to get rid of that delusion." Another person asked, "People say that those who have received *upāsana* can attain the physical manifestation of the favourite God and other blessings by *sādhana*. What is the meaning ?" Bhagavan said, "That which is present at all times is *sākshāth* (manifest). The person 'I' is always present (*sākshāth*). Then what is *kāram* ? That which is the cause is *kāram*. So *sākshātkāram* (manifestation) means the knowledge that that

which is true, that which is permanent, and that which is the cause of everything is one's own Self. And they say that God will descend from somewhere and manifest himself if the Self which is ever existing, creates a shape according to its own desires, and meditates on it. You give up the Self which is existing at all times and at all places, and do *sādhana* with the hope that some Godhood from somewhere will manifest Himself. They say that God just descends and again just disappears. You give up the Self which is always existent and strive for this transient vision, obtain boons and thus multiply the mental struggles and strivings. There will be no trouble at all if one simply remains silent, as one is," said Bhagavan.

Though Bhagavan was teaching us so clearly that *sākshātkāram* means only the good state and the good ideas beyond the owner's thoughts, I felt it a great pity that we were not able to understand it. While I was thus thinking, someone asked, "That state of exalted thought and existence which is above the owner's mental plane is natural and possible only for people like Bhagavan, but is it possible for ordinary people like us without *sādhana*?" Bhagavan said, "Certainly it is! *Sādhana* is necessary but for what purpose? His Self is there at all times and at all places. So there is no need to try and get it from somewhere else. *Sādhana* is only to get rid of the bodily and other illusions which are in the way of the self standing up as Self. This delusion arises only by thinking that this bodily world is real, instead of looking at the Self, which is real. *Sādhana* is only to get rid of this illusion. Otherwise, why should there be *sādhana* for the Self to attain its own Self? He who has realised his own Self does not recognize anything else."

24th August 1946

(69) BRAHMAN IS REAL : THE WORLD IS AN ILLUSION

Sometime ago a new arrival to the Asramam asked Bhagavan something^e in English, which I could not follow, being ignorant of the language. But Bhagavan replied in Tamil, and I give below his reply to the extent that I am able to grasp.

Bhagavan said, "The question arises : It is said that Brahman is real, and world an illusion ; again it is said that the whole universe is an image of Brahman. How are these two statements to be reconciled ? In the *sādhak* stage, you have got to say that the world is an illusion. There is no other way, because when a man forgets that he is the Brahman, who is real, permanent and ever-present at all times and everywhere, and deludes himself into thinking that he is a body in the universe which is filled with bodies that are transitory, and labours under that delusion, you have got to remind him that the world is unreal and a delusion. Why ? Because, his vision which has forgotten its own Self, is dwelling in the external material universe and will not turn inward into introspection unless you impress on him that all this external, material universe is unreal. When once he realises his own Self, and also that there is nothing other than his own Self, he will come to look upon the whole universe as Brahman. There is no universe without his Self. So long as a man does not see his own Self which is the origin of all, but looks only at the external world as real and permanent, you have to tell him that all this external universe is an

illusion. You cannot help it. Take a paper. We see only the script, and nobody notices the paper on which the script is written. The paper is there, whether the script on it is there or not. To those who look upon the script as real, you have to say that it is unreal, an illusion, since it rests upon the paper. The wise man looks upon both the paper and script as one. So also with Brahman and the universe.

"It is the same in the case of the cinema. The screen is always there; the pictures come and go, but do not affect the screen. What does the screen care whether the pictures appear or disappear? The pictures depend upon the screen. But what use are they to it? The man who looks only at the pictures on the screen and not the screen itself, is troubled by the pains and pleasures that occur in the story. But the man who views the screen, realises that the images are all shadow play and not something apart and distinct from the screen. So also with the world. It is all a shadow play," said Bhagavan. The questioner took leave and went away, happy at the reply.

25th August 1946

(70) *SWAMI* IS EVERYWHERE

The Europeans whom you sent with a letter of introduction came here by car the day before yesterday. An American lady also came with them. Yesterday morning they went round the town and after visiting Skandāsramam, reached the Asramam by midday. They came into the hall by 3 p.m. after making all arrangements to leave the place,

and sat down. Unaccustomed to squat on the floor, that poor American lady somehow managed to sit by my side but stretched out her legs towards Bhagavan's sofa.

I myself felt it unmannerly but kept quiet as she was to go away presently. One of the attendants, Rajagopala Iyer, could not however put up with it and so respectfully suggested to her to sit cross-legged. Bhagavan saw that and said smilingly, "When they find it difficult even to sit down on the floor, should you force them to sit cross-legged also?" "No, No! As they do not know that it is disrespectful to stretch their legs towards Bhagavan, I merely told them so, that is all," said the devotee. "Oh, is that so? It is disrespectful, is it? Then it is disrespectful for me to stretch my legs towards them. What you say applies to me as well." Saying that in a lighter vein, Bhagavan sat up cross-legged. All of us laughed but we felt a bit troubled in our minds. Those foreigners stayed there for about half an hour and then went away, taking leave of Bhagavan.

Bhagavan spent the whole of yesterday stretching out his legs from time to time and then folding them, saying that it might be deemed disrespectful. His legs get stiff in ten minutes if he folds them and the stiffness will not disappear unless the legs are stretched out for at least half an hour afterwards, not to speak of the pain that results. This afternoon when I went into the hall, there were not more than two or three persons there. Bhagavan began stretching his legs saying, "I do not know if I can stretch them. They say it is not good manners." Poor Rajagopala Iyer was standing there crest-fallen and with a repentant look. Bhagavan is after all, full of compassion! He stretched out his legs as usual. We all felt happy. Looking at

me seated in the hall, he began telling us the story of Avvaiyār.

"Seeing that Sundaramurthi was going away on a white elephant which had come from *Kailās*, the Rajah of Chēra whispered in the ear of his horse the *pañchākshari mantra* and got upon it to go to *Kailās*. Avvaiyār, who was at the time doing *pūja* to Lord Ganesar, saw them both going to *Kailās* and so tried to hurry up her *pūja* as she too wanted to go to *Kailās*. Seeing that, Ganesar said, 'Old woman, don't hurry. Let your *pūja* be performed as usual. I shall take you to *Kailās* before they reach it.' Accordingly, the *pūja* was performed in due course. Waving his hand around, he said, 'Old lady, close your eyes.' That was all. When she opened her eyes, she found herself seated in *Kailās* in front of Pārvati and Parameswara. By the time Sundaramurthi and Chēra Raja reached the place, they found her already seated there. Surprised at that, they asked her how she had got there and were overjoyed at her *bhakti*.

After all, she was very old. So she sat opposite to Parameswara with her legs stretched out like me. Pārvati could not bear that sight. She was worried because to sit with legs thus stretched out towards Swami, she felt, was a great insult. She respectfully suggested to Parameswara that she should be permitted to tell the old lady about it. 'Oh, don't speak, don't open your mouth. We should not say anything to her,' said Ishwara. Even so, is not Pārvati his better half? How could she put up with that insult? She therefore whispered into the ear of her maid to tell the old lady about that. That woman approached the old lady and said, 'Grandma, Grandma, don't keep your legs outstretched towards Ishwara.' 'Is that so? Tell

me on which side Ishwara is not present. Shall I turn this side ?' said Avvaiyār. So saying, she turned her outstretched legs to another side when Ishwara got turned that side ; and when again she turned to a different side, He also got turned the same side. Thus Swami got turned to whichever side she turned her legs. Looking at Pārvati, Ishwara said, ' Do you see now ? You would not listen to me. See, how she turns me this side and that. That is why I told you not to open your mouth.' Then Pārvati requested the old lady to excuse her. It is similar to that when people are asked not to stretch their legs towards Swami. Where is He not present ? "

That devotee then said, " There is a similar incident in the story of Namadeva, is it not ? " " Yes, that is so," said Bhagavan and began relating that story thus :

Namadeva used to pride himself on the fact that Vittal was always more fond of him than others and so once Jnanadeva and others took him to the house of Gorakumbhar for a feast. After food, all of them sat in a row and, during conversation, one of them said in an allegorical manner to Gorakumbhar, " You are used to make good pots, aren't you ? Now tell us which amongst these pots are good and which are bad ? " Gorakumbhar thereupon took a potter's testing rod and began hitting them on the head one by one.

They all kept quiet out of regard for him and just kept their heads bent. When it came to the turn of Namadeva, he expressed his resentment at the procedure and refused to undergo the test. Kumbhar forthwith declared that that was an immature pot. All the others burst into laughter at that. Poor Namadeva could not contain his anger. He began saying that they all had conspired toge-

ther to humiliate him thus and went to Vittal with tears in his eyes to complain. "Well, what's the matter?" asked Swami, and Namadeva related the whole story. "That is all right; but tell me what did the others say when they were tested?" asked Swami.

Namadeva : They all shut their mouths and bowed when tested with the rod.

Vittal : And you ?

Namadeva : Am I like them? How intimate I am with you! Am I to be beaten like that for a test?

Vittal : That is called *ahankāra* (Ego). All of them knew my real self and had a contented mind. You are not so.

Namadeva : But you are kind to me; and what truth is there for me to know?

Vittal : That is not it. You must serve elders if you want to know the truth. What am I? If you dance, I dance. If you laugh, I laugh. If you jump, I jump. If you find out the truth, you will not have these jumpings and bumpings.

Namadeva : You say, elders. Who is there older than you?

Vittal : Who? There is a temple in the nearby forest. In that temple there is a *sādhū*. Serve him and realise the truth.

When Namadeva went to that temple in the forest, he saw an unkempt man lying there. "How could this man be a *sādhū*?" he thought and, when he went closer to that person, he found the legs of the man on a *linga*.

Shuddering at the sight, he said with trepidation, "Sir, what is this? You are putting your legs on the head of God!" That man said, "Oho! Nama, is that you? Vittal sent you, didn't he?" Taken aback at this and wondering how the *sādhū* could know about him, he asked again, "Sir, you are a *sādhū*, aren't you? How could you put your legs on a *lingū*?" "Is that so, my dear son? I don't know all that. I am unable to lift my legs. Will you please lift them for me and move them away?" he said. So Namadeva, agreeing to do so, lifted them and tried to put them elsewhere but found that there was another *linga* there also. Thus wherever he tried to put the legs, he found a *linga* there and so finally, he placed them on himself, when he himself became a *linga*. That is to say, by the touch of those holy feet, he had *jnānōdaya* (dawn of knowledge of the Self). Namadeva stood up dazed. The *sādhū* asked, "Yes, do you now realise (the truth)?" Saying "Yes, I have realised," he bowed before Visobakhechar, disciple of Jnaneswar, went home, sat in his room and got immersed in *dhyāna* and stopped going to Vittal.

After some days, Vittal came there running and asked him, "Nama, how is it you haven't been coming to me of late?", when Namadev said, "*Prabhu* (Lord)! where is the place in which you are not present? I see you here at all times. I am you and you are me. That is why I do not go to you." "Oh, I see, that is good," so saying the Swami vanished.

Bhagavan concluded the story and simultaneously released the legs that were kept crossed.

26th August 1946

(71) AKSHARA SWARŪPAM
(THE IMPERISHABLE SPIRIT)

Rājagopala Iyer came back some time towards the end of July to help in arranging the papers and books and handing them out when asked and generally to look after the library work.

During the early days, while rummaging the papers that had been lying there for a long time, he found a small piece of paper containing a Tamil verse in Bhagavan's own handwriting and a Telugu translation of it.

When it was handed over to Bhagavan, he could not remember whose verse it was and so called me and, after showing it, asked me whose it was. On scrutiny, I found that it contained a Tamil verse by Narasimha Shetty about Tiruchuli written after the *grihapravēsam* ceremony of Sundara Mandiram in Tiruchuli and a Telugu translation in verse written by myself. After telling Bhagavan this, I asked permission to take a copy of it, and he consented.

No sooner did I get up after *Veda pārāyana* to go home and bowed before him than Bhagavan said, "Where is my paper?" Though he had agreed to my request to take it home and bring it back the next morning after copying it, he had doubts whether I would give it back or not. Whenever I see his pearl-shaped letters I am always strongly tempted to keep the papers containing them. Bhagavan asked me to give the paper back so that I might get rid of all traces of such desires.

That night I copied the Telugu verse and also the Tamil verse in Telugu script on another paper so as to show it to Bhagavan and then copy it in the Asramam

note book. So when I went to the Asramam next morning at 7-30 and bowed before Bhagavan, he asked me again, "Where is that paper?" "Yes, I have brought it. I have written the Tamil verse in Telugu script. I shall copy it if you will kindly see whether what I have copied is right," said I. Then he saw it and gave it back to me. I took out the note-book from the shelf and kept it with me before he came down from the hill. He did not see that. As I was about to go out with the paper and my bag in my hand, Bhagavan said, "Give me back that paper after copying it. I shall need it." I felt very humiliated at being asked so many times for the paper. I could not contain myself and said, "In this writing work, ever so many papers have passed through my hands and I have not kept a single one. I have given back every one of them. He himself (pointing to Rajagopala Iyer) is my witness." When I said that, Rajagopala Iyer said, "Yes, yes." I still could not restrain my feelings and so I began saying, "This is like the Telugu saying, 'He who shouts, rules!' All are asking and getting the writings of Bhagavan. If they chance to get such papers they keep them without asking for permission. Am I to be misled into forgetting the reality by this little piece of paper? I do not want it at all. I shall give it back straight-away." As I said so, my throat got choked and tears welled up in my eyes. Unable to contain myself any longer, I went out, somehow copied it in the book, gave the book to Bhagavan and the paper into the hands of Rajagopala Iyer who was standing nearby and in a quivering tone said, "I have given the paper to him."

With a heart full of benevolence Bhagavan said in a soft tone, "Keep it if you like." Am I lacking in pride?

"Why? This letter gets obliterated and this paper gets torn," said I, in a quivering voice. As I was about to sit in my usual place, Bhagavan said in a soft voice, "Is the *Padyam* (that is composed by you) with you?" Holding my breath I merely said, "Yes." Though outwardly I appeared unconcerned, inwardly desire was tormenting me.

Two or three years ago, when Bhagavan composed a verse people vied with each other in getting it written in Bhagavan's own hand. Some of them grabbed at the opportunity of securing his letters, hid them and refused to surrender them when asked. Seeing all this, and so as not to arouse such desires in me, I wrote a Telugu verse and contented myself with it.

Verse :

హృదయ కమలదళంబులఁ జెదరకుండ
నక్షరస్వరూపుండవై యలరు నిన్ను
గర్తవాసన మనకచేఁ గాంచలేక
హస్తలిఖితాక్షరముగోర నగునె రమణ॥

Meaning : You who are always present in the shape of Indestructible Being in this lotus heart, is it proper to ask for a hand-written letter unable to see the Reality because of the veil of *karma vāsana* ?

If only, some time or other, the eyes are washed so as to remove the veil the *akshara swarūpa* (the form of the imperishable spirit) will be clearly seen. That letter (*akshara*) will not get wiped out. That paper (lotus heart) will not get torn. It is more than enough if this *aksharam* is given away to those who can shout and the veil on the

eyes of the voiceless child is removed. The child will then look after itself. The title of "*Bhava Roga Bhishagvara*" (the eminent doctor for the disease of mundane existence) is already there. Will he now live up to his title? Let us see. There is however one thing. He is continuously administering medicine to all. And the dimness in the eyes is getting reduced little by little.

27th August 1946

(72) *UPADĒSA SĀRAM* — *UNNADHI*
NALUBADHI

Sri Bhagavan himself wrote and kept in Telugu characters the Malayalam version of *Upadēsa Sāram* — known as *Kummi Pāttu*. In 1944, I took it from Bhagavan saying I would make a copy of it. As I was returning the original after copying it in my note-book, a devotee said to Bhagavan thus : "Bhagavan wrote *Upadēsa Sāram* only when Muruganar wrote about the *līlās* of Lord Siva — about Siva blessing the *tapasvis* of Dāruka Vana, isn't that so ?"

Bhagavan said : "Yes, what he wrote was not merely about the story of the Dāruka Vana *tapasvis*. He thought of writing about all the *Avatārs* of the Lord as applying to me, in 100 verses. He took up the folk song of '*Undeepara*' for the purpose and wrote up to 70 verses. Towards the end of those 70 verses he wrote about the story of the *tapasvis* of Dāruka Vana and then requested me to write the remaining 30 verses as they pertain to *upadēsa* (teaching). 'You have done everything. What is there for me

to do? You had better write that also,' I said, but he did not write them for a long time. He insisted on my writing them, saying that he did not know anything about the *Upadēsa* portion of it and that Bhagavan alone could write them. What was I to do? I had no alternative but to write. After writing those 30 verses, we called them '*Upadēsa Undiyār*'. When that was done, Yogi Ramiah said he did not know Tamil and so pressed me to write them in Telugu, and so I wrote them in *Dvipada*. After that, Nayana said, 'What about Sanskrit?' I agreed and wrote them in Sanskrit also. After I had written them in those three languages, Kunjuswami, Ramakrishna and others requested me to write them in Malayalam also, and hence I wrote them in *Kummi Pāttu* style in Malayalam."

"So the original is the Tamil, next is the Telugu, then the Sanskrit and finally the Malayalam, isn't it?" I asked and Bhagavan said, "Yes." I then continued: "As soon as Nayana saw those *Upadēsa Sāram slokāś*, it seems he wrote a light commentary on them?" "Yes, he was then in Mango-tree (choota) cave. I wrote the *slokāś* and sent them to him. Telling the people around him, 'Can we write even one *sloka* like this?', he wrote a light commentary on the *slokāś* on a day when there was an eclipse which occurred soon after and sent it. They were published in 1928," said Bhagavan.

I then asked, "How was *Unnadhi Nalubadhi* written?" "I had to write that also in Tamil at Muruganar's pressing request. Yogi Ramiah too was there at the time. He requested me to write at least the *bhāva* (purport) in Telugu and so I wrote it in prose. After that Madhava said, 'What about Malayalam?' I said yes and wrote it in that language also in '*kili*' (metre). That will be like

a *Seesamalika* verse. 'That also I wrote in the Telugu script. You may make a copy of it if you like,' said Bhagavan.

"Why didn't Bhagavan write it in Sanskrit?" I asked. Bhagavan said, "At that time, Nayana, Lakshmana Sarma and others were here. So I left it to them. Why should I worry, I thought, and so kept quiet." I asked, "Did Nayana write the Sanskrit *slokās* for *Unnadhi Nalubadhi* at that time? Bhagavan said, "No, at the time of writing the verses, Muruganar and myself were arranging them suitably when Nayana gave us his advice but did not write the *slokās*. He went away to Sirsi after that. While he was there, Viswanathan and Kapali went and stayed with him for some time. Meanwhile, Lakshmana Sarma wrote *slokās* for *Unnadhi Nalubadhi*. The same were forwarded to Nayana to return them duly edited. Seeing that, Nayana said he could as well write the *slokās* himself rather than correct them and so returned them as they were. Subsequently with the help of Viswanathan and Kapali he wrote *slokās* to conform exactly to the Tamil verses and sent them. The former, however, remained as it was while Nayana's was published under the title '*Saḍ Darshanam*'. Things happen as they should. What can we do? In accordance with that Sanskrit translation, Kapali wrote his commentary in English and in Sanskrit. After that Viswanathan translated it into Tamil."

"How did the *Anubhandam* (Supplement) happen to be written?" I asked. "I did not write it for any particular reason. As and when somebody wanted a verse I wrote one, and all of them were added on as supplementary. For the first publication, there were only 30 verses. Afterwards, they became 40. Even they were written only in the first

instance. Subsequently I wrote them in Telugu and then in Malayalam. Some of the *slokās* are from those written by great people in olden days and some by Lakshmana Sarma who followed the prose written by me," said Bhagavan. "Some of the *slokās* are written by Bhagavan also?" I said. "I must have written only two or three," said Bhagavan. "Bhagavan must have written some of the Telugu verses also," I said. "Yes, there must be some. If you like, look at the manuscript. You will see the details," said Bhagavan.

28th August 1946

(73) THE ONE KNOWN AS 'I' IS THE
MIND ITSELF

This morning an Andhra gentleman questioned Bhagavan thus : "You say the important thing to do is to enquire and find out who I am, but how is one to find it out? Are we to do *japam* saying, 'Who am I? Who am I?' Or should we repeat, '*Neti*' (not this)? I want to know the exact method, Swami." After waiting for a while Bhagavan said, "What is there to find out? Who is to find out? There must be some one to find out, mustn't there? Who is that some one? Where has that some one come from? That is the thing to find out first. If one finds out from where one is born, there is nothing else than one's own Self."

That questioner said, again, "Should there not be some *sādhana*, to find out who one's self is? Which *sādhana* will be useful?" "Yes, it is that that has

to be found out. If you ask where to see, we should say, look within. After all, the one known as the 'I' is the mind itself. What is its shape, how was it born, and where was it born; that is what you have to see or enquire," said Bhagavan. The questioner asked again, "If we ask where this 'I' is born, the ancients say, it is in the heart. How could we see that?"

"Yes, we have to say, the heart itself. If you want to see it, the mind must get submerged completely. It is no use doing *japam* with the words, "Who am I? Who am I?" nor by repeating with *bhāva* the words '*Neti, Neti*,'" said Bhagavan. When the questioner said, that was exactly what he was unable to do, Bhagavan replied, "Yes, that is so. That is the difficulty. We always exist and are in all places. This body and all other attendant things are gathered round us by ourselves only. There is no difficulty in gathering them. The real difficulty is in throwing them out. We find it difficult to see what is in us and to get rid of what is foreign to us. See, what a great tragedy it is!" said Bhagavan.

Some time ago, when a Bengali youth asked similar questions, Bhagavan explained to him at great length. His doubts not being cleared yet, that youth asked, "You say that the Self is present at all times and at all places. Where exactly is that 'I'?" Bhagavan replied with a smile, "When I say you are present at all times and at all places and you ask where is that 'I', it is something like asking, 'when you are in Tiruvannamalai, where is Tiruvannamalai?' When you are everywhere, where are you to search? The real delusion is the feeling that you are the body. When you get rid of that delusion, what remains is your Self. You should search for a thing which

is not with you but where is the need to search for a thing which is always with you? All *sādhana*s are for getting rid of the delusion that you are the body. The knowledge that 'I am' is always there; call it *Ātma*, or *Paramātmā* or whatever you like. One should get rid of the idea that 'I am the body.' There is no need to search for that 'I' that is the Self. That Self is all-pervading."

As an illustration of this, I give hereunder the words of Bhagavan in "*Unnadhi Nalubadhi*":—

Without the Self where is time and where is space? If we are the body, we have to be bound by time and space. Are we the body? We are one and identical now, then and always; here there and everywhere. So, we are existent, without time and space."

— Verse 16.

8th September 1946

(74) THE GOLDEN JUBILEE FESTIVITIES

Some friends requested me to write about the festivities connected with the Golden Jubilee that was celebrated on 1st September and so I am writing this letter. In this connection, even the people actively connected with the celebrations do not remember exactly what all was done. That being so, is it possible for a person of the weaker sex, who is only a mere observer, to know and understand all that was done? I am however venturing to write about it bearing in mind what is stated by the author of *Bhāgawatam* when he wrote: "I shall expound to the

extent I have seen or known or have heard from men of wisdom."

About twenty days before the date of the celebrations, the *Sarvādhikāri* returned from Madras. About a month elapsed by then, since he had left for Madurai. It seems soon after he reached Madras several devotees met and made plans for the celebrations but until he returned to Tiruvannamalai the preparations for the celebrations were not very much in evidence. I do not know if anyone was working hard elsewhere for the publication of the Souvenir in English but so far as the people in the hall were concerned no one appeared very keen about the celebrations; only to satisfy the devotees' request, Bhagavan pretended to rummage old records so as to collect all Sanskrit *slokās* for translation into English. As soon as the *Sarvādhikāri* arrived, preparations began in right earnest. There is no knowing what deliberations were held in the office or on whose persuasion it was, but they began erecting a big thatched shed adjacent to the hall on the hill side. For the past one month, Krishnaswami had been feeling weak and run down. No sooner, however, was the work on the shed began than his weakness disappeared and he got enormous strength. He took an active part, climbing up the ladder, stitching the palm leaves together and doing all such work. The pandal was erected. They said, the floor must be cemented. Watering the place, ramming in and doing this work and that, he appeared to have got the strength of a giant. It is said that Hanumān was originally sitting quiet like a bird with his tail tucked under him, but when he heard that the ocean had to be crossed, he assumed *Viswarūpa* (body of enormous proportions) and did all the work required. This is an illustration of the saying that

God's devotees get inspired and do all types of work for the good of others when occasion arises.

You remember, you came here about twenty days ago and took away with you the songs and essays of Sri Chinta Dikshitulu and my *Gobbi* song saying you would give them printed before the Golden Jubilee? After that, Muruganar and some other devotees wrote some songs and verses and sent them for printing. The commentary on *Sri Ramana Gita* written in Sanskrit by Kapali Sastri was received duly printed. Invitations in English with 50 gold stars printed around them were sent out to devotees.

Fifty years ago, a day before *Gokulāshṭami*, it seems Bhagavan reached Ariyanallur. That was a Sunday. On Monday, i.e., on *Ashtami* day, he had a hearty meal at the house of Muthukrishna Bhagavathar in Kilūr and stepped into Arunachala Kshetram, on the morning of *Navami*, Tuesday. From that day till now, it is a well-known fact that he has not moved out of this place. That was the 1st of September 1896. To enable people in other continents, as well, to celebrate the event according to the Gregorian calendar, the 1st of September has been fixed for the Golden Jubilee celebrations.

According to Hindu traditions, the day after *Gokulāshṭami* should be deemed to be the day of the Golden Jubilee celebrations. We do not know the ways of Providence but this year too *Gokulāshṭami* happened to be on a Monday (19th August 1946). The next day was a Tuesday. According to Tamil traditions, Ramaswami Iyer and others said that that was the day for the celebrations, and so he along with some other devotees wrote some songs and verses in Tamil and recited them. Sri Sambasiva Rao said that according to Telugu traditions, *Navami* lasted till

Wednesday and so the 50 years were completed only on the 21st and, so saying, he wrote an old *slokā* or prayer and a *padam* from the Bhāgavatham beginning with, “*Nee pada kamala sevayu*” — in the service of your lotus feet — and placed it before Bhagavan. Another person composed *padams*, songs and essays and began reading them. That *Stotra Pārāyana* (recitations of prayers in verse) was continued until two days ago.

The railway strike commenced on the 23rd. We were wondering how the devotees could come here. Some came to Katpadi already on the 29th and somehow managed to come by bus or lorry. On *Chathurthi* (fourth day of lunar month), *pūja* for Vināyaka was performed in the temple. By the side of the shed, which Bhagavan named as “Jubilee Hall”, a huge pandal was erected which looked very much like a marriage pandal. Some said it would be good if a garland of green leaves was tied around the sofa and decorated.

All the speakers came by bus by 9 o'clock at night. The celebrations are to commence next morning. We discussed them till late into the night and then went to sleep. When we went to the Asramam in the early morning by 5 o'clock as usual, “*Na karmanā*” was already being recited. It seems they started the routine an hour earlier than usual. The Asramam *Vidyārthis* (students) brought the articles for *pūja*, placed them before Bhagavan and, after bowing before him, took them into the temple. Upbraiding ourselves at our carelessness, we went into the pandal and were surprised to find that it was already beautifully decorated. All round the whole of the shed, a red cloth with folds was tied, along with garlands of green mango leaves, flowers and many other things. Recently the Rani of Baroda sent sarees full

of *jaree* (silver lacing) to decorate the Goddess in the temple. All those sarees were spread over the stone sofa, which was on the northern side of that *parnasāla* (thatched shed) named Jubilee Hall, so as to give it the shape of a *Mandir*. The silver-laced sarees were shining brilliantly because of the lights. When I asked one of the devotees whether the sarees were not meant for decorating the goddess in the temple, he said that that decoration could be done only after decorating Bhagavan's sofa. Another devotee said that the idea was excellent. Nothing had been done at 9 the previous night. So, if by 5 the next morning all that decoration had been done, we must conclude that the devotees did not at all sleep the whole night. We do not know how other devotees arrived during the night but by morning they were all seated in groups in several places with all their belongings.

Bhagavan finished his bath and breakfast by 6-30 a.m. and went towards Arunachala. By the time he returned, Krishnaswami had already spread over the stone sofa pure *khaddar* clothes and covered the seat with a newly purchased cloth bearing the picture of the spinning wheel and the tri-colour flag. It is no exaggeration to say that it was attractive because of its simplicity and also because the flag is a symbol of our national honour, in the midst of the splendour of the varied decorations. It is interesting to note that it was on a similar second day of September that Jawaharlal Nehru became the Prime Minister of India.

By seven o'clock, Bhagavan was sitting on the sofa in his usual loin-cloth with his radiant smile, to bless his devotees. His gracious and benevolent look made all the devotees happy. It was indeed a great privilege to see him on that day. In olden days, Valmiki, Vyasa and other great

authors told us how GóD Himself came down to this world in the shape of Avatars like Rama and Krishna to establish Dharma from time to time — “*Dharma Samsthāpanārthāya Sambhavāmi Yuge Yuge.*” (Gita). Today we are lucky in having a similar fortune. An *Avatāra Purusha*, *Jagadguru*, Sri Ramana *Paramātma* has been staying in Arunachala *Kshetra* for the last fifty years and has been purifying people by his mere looks. To those who serve him with undivided *bhakti* he can with his silent teaching, remove the worldly bonds and give *moksha*. Our duty is to serve him instead of wasting precious time on trifles. This Golden Jubilee itself proclaims that for fifty years now he has been occupying the exalted position of a *Guru*. Many devotees say this is a golden age or a new age. All these days many fortunate people secured his Grace, drank the nectar of peace and became blessed ones. Many more are likely to gain his blessings thus. Till now my eyes have not been opened to know in fullness his real greatness and obtain his blessings. There will be many like me, who do not know how this personification of kindness is giving us various occasions to serve him. Of all these occasions, it occurs to me, this Golden Jubilee is the greatest. Even now, I do not know how to serve this great Sage, how to pray to him and how to worship him. When he who is omnipresent, who is omniscient and who is incomprehensible comes here in human form what can we give him and how could we satisfy him? The real worship of him is to be in *mowna* (silence). As that type of worship is beyond my reach, I am always staying at a distance, hoping against hope that I may gain salvation by touching the dust of his feet and by satisfying myself with that only. What else is there to wish for except that he should live with us like

this for long giving the benefit of his grace to the true seekers of knowledge and saving them by his kindness and blessings.

I shall describe to you in another letter what all that happened from 7 o'clock in the morning to 7-15 at night.

9th September 1946

(75) THE GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

In my yesterday's letter, I wrote to you in general about the Golden Jubilee celebrations. I am writing to you in this letter a summary of all that was done on that day from 7 a.m. to 7-15 p.m.

The morning programme began at 7-15 a.m. with Uma and other *punyasthrees* (married ladies) bringing a milk pot with *bhajans* and placing it at the feet of Bhagavan. After that, several devotees read essays, songs and verses written by them in Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese, English and Urdu. This *stotra* (praise of the Lord) continued with short intervals till about 2 p.m. There were musical concerts by Budalur Krishnamurthy Sastry from 8-30 to 9-30 a.m., rest from 9-45 to 10-00, *pūja* and *Ārati* in Mathrubhuteswara Temple from 10-15. At 11 o'clock inmates of the Asramam brought *prasādam* from Aruna-chala Temple and placed it before Bhagavan with great devotion. Then there was rest from 11 a.m. to 12 noon.

Devotees requested Bhagavan to take rest as usual till 2 p.m. but would he agree? No sooner had he taken his food, he sat on his sofa as usual. As a number of people had come long distances for his *darshan* and it was possible

they might go away disappointed for want of time, he did not mind his bodily discomfort but out of his abundant love and grace he began giving them *darshan* without taking his usual rest.

Many people went home thinking that there would not be Bhagavan's *darshan* till 2 p.m. When after food I came there, Bhagavan was already sitting on the sofa in the shed in his resplendant glory, surrounded by all the devotees.

The *stotrās* were going on. You cannot compare this great Sage with any emperor or god. That is so because if you go for the *darshan* of an emperor there will be many impediments, and recommendations are required from many people. As for *darshan* of the Gods, if you go to *Vaikuntam*, Jaya and Vijaya will be there at the gate and will say that it is not the right time and ask you to go away. If you go to *Kailāsa* the same thing is done by the *pramathaganās* (the servants of Siva). Here it is different; there is only one rule. No one should be obstructed from having *darshan* at any time — even animals and birds. Who is there equal to this great personification of kindness! He alone is equal to Himself.

From 2 o'clock onwards, people assembled there occupying every inch of space. The volunteers were silently arranging to seat them all comfortably. The Jubilee Hall presented the appearance of the durbar hall of an emperor. At 2 o'clock the Jubilee Souvenir was presented, and after that the salutations of Brahmin pandits who came there with *Pūrṇa Kumbhe* (a vessel full of water) reciting Vedas, and thereafter there was the reading of an essay from the Hindi Prachar Sabha. The loud speaker was then installed and addresses were presented in Telugu on behalf of the Arya

Vysya Samajam and in Tamil on behalf of Muniswamy Chetty Brothers. After that the lectures began.

The Chairman to the meeting was Sri C. S. Kuppuswami Iyer, a Judge of the Madras High Court. After his opening address in English an essay written by Sir S. Radhakrishnan was read by Sri T. K. Doraiswamy Iyer. That essay was received just then by post.

After that Swami Rajeswarananda and Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan spoke in English, Justice Chandrasekhara Iyer spoke in Telugu, M. S. Chellam and Omandur Ramaswami Reddiar, (subsequently he was the Chief Minister of Madras State) in Tamil and K. K. Iravatham Iyer in Malayalam. R. S. Venkatarama Sastry read some prayer *slokās* and lectured in Sanskrit. Kunjuswami sang some songs. The purport of all those speeches is worth recording but how do I know all those languages to record them? By the time the concluding remarks of the Chairman were made, it was 4-45 p.m. During the period, the Indian Information Bureau representatives took a number of photos with a view to prepare a film of the Golden Jubilee celebrations. And then there was a quarter of an hour's rest. At 5 p.m. there was a lecture of thanksgiving on behalf of the residents of Tiruvannamalai by Annamalai Pillai, after that a musical concert by Musiri Subrahmania Iyer, then *Veda Pārāyana* etc., and the proceedings came to a close by 7-15 p.m. Before that, at about 6 p.m., the mahout brought the temple elephant fully decorated and made it prostrate before Bhagavan. That elephant is usually kept at the Thousand Pillars Mandapam and it was within that Mandapam in an underground cave that Bhagavan did his early *tapas* and became the emperor of Yoga. It was therefore quite appropriate that the elephant staying in that

Mandapam should make obeisance to the emperor of that Mandapam. This is how the Golden Jubilee was celebrated.

You may ask what *sandesam* (message) Bhagavan gave to all those people who came and prostrated before him and prayed for his help and guidance. I wrote a verse in Telugu on that occasion meaning : "He is there as an observer, seeing everything but unaffected by them without any *gunas* (attributes) and as the embodiment of *pranava*." In the same manner he was there without any movement, absorbed in his own Self, seeing and hearing everything but silent all through. That is the great and invaluable message he gave us. The grace and the kindness that shine from those eyes pierce through the hearts of all living beings and protect them by giving them the bliss of *shānti* (peace). The brilliant *thejas* (light) of the *Mowna Bhāskara* (Silent Sun) spreads on all sides, destroys the darkness of ignorance but that *Mowna* which is beyond mind and speech—how could that be broadcast?

Part II

13th December 1946

(1) *BRAHMOTSAVAM*

On the 28th day of last month, corresponding to *Suddha Panchami* in the month of Karthika, the *Dhvajarahnam* (flag hoisting ceremony) was performed in the temple of Sri Arunachaleswara in connection with the commencement of the *Brahmotsava* festival. In the evening of the tenth day of that festival the sacred light is lit on the peak of Arunachala mountain. This year that was done on the 7th of this month. During the ten days of the annual festival, the whole town bustles with the crowd of pilgrims that come and go. It is usual for them to come for *darshan* of Bhagavan. The *Deepotsavam* (lighting festival) is on the day of Karthika *Nakshatra* (star). As the crowds begin gathering even four or five days earlier, it is usual for Bhagavan to be seated in the thatched shed in front of the Māthrubhuteswara temple to facilitate *darshan* to the people. This year however the devotees felt that it would be better to seat Bhagavan in the Golden Jubilee Hall* and so made all necessary arrangements to prevent rain coming in by erecting tatties all round. Bhagavan shifted into the hall three days after the commencement of the *Brahmotsavam* though he formerly used to do so only

* A thatched shed constructed to the north of the Old Hall in connection with the Golden Jubilee celebrations.

four or five days after. It was raining heavily. Three-fourths of those who came were poor people. And amongst them were the old, the decrepit and women with babies in arms.

As the evening of the tenth day is the festival of the Sacred Light, people who set out on *Giri pradakshina* (going round the holy mountain) from about 2 a.m. on that day come to the Asramam in groups with wet clothes. To enable them to have *darshan* without any difficulty Bhagavan used to have one of the doors of the hall closed and the sofa on which he reclined, placed across the door. We thought the same thing should be done now also. "Why?" said Bhagavan, "It is all right here."

Throughout that night, there was a stormy wind and rain. My timepiece stopped. I therefore got up without knowing the exact time, bathed and sat up thinking of going to the Asramam early. There was no noisy movement of crowds on the road. I thought it was too early and so felt like resting for a while. I fell into a nap. Suddenly I heard the voices of the crowds as in a dream. I got up in confusion. The rain had decreased. Owing to the strong winds the clouds had dispersed. The moonlight was shining in the room through the windows. Feeling that I might be late, I got ready hurriedly and went out only to find that rivulets from the mountain were flowing rapidly making a gurgling noise. The road was a sheet of water. I hastened into the hall and saw the time by the Asramam clock to be 4-30 a.m. Bhagavan was not to be seen in the hall. When I asked someone, where he was he said "There, in the shed." Exclaiming, "In the shed in this rain and wind!", I went there and saw Bhagavan sitting on the sofa without even a *duppatti* (sheet of thick cloth) over his

body. Like the full moon, his face was beaming with smiles and spreading an air of benevolence and happiness to those around him. The smoke of the scented *Agar-bathies* (incense sticks) filled the whole place with a sweet smell as if it were the perfume of the sandalwood trees of the heavenly *Nandavana*. The *Purānās* say that somewhere lies the ocean of milk, that there in that ocean lies the island of Sweta Dwipa, that there in that island Sri Maha Vishnu has His abode and that all the *Devatās* (heavenly beings) surround Him there, offering their homage to Him in enjoyment of bliss and happiness. To me the vast sheet of rain water that surrounded the hall appeared to be the ocean of milk, the Golden Jubilee Hall flooded with electric lights appeared to be the Sweta Dwipa, this Ramana Paramatma seated on the sofa to be Sri Maha Vishnu, and the devotees that surrounded him and offered their homage to be the *Devatās*. My heart swelled with blissful happiness at that sight.

As I approached Bhagavan with many similar thoughts crowding into my mind, he began to smile. I did not know why. When I bowed before him and got up, he said, "The Vedic recitation is all over before crowds begin gathering." Two months back, during the Golden Jubilee celebrations, the programme relating to *Vedapārāyana* was gone through an hour earlier than usual and so it was all over when we went there, at the usual time. I thought that the significance of Bhagavan's smile was that the same thing had happened this time also. Ashamed at my own carelessness, I asked Bhagavan, "Have you been here all night?", Bhagavan replied, "No. Every year people used to come group after group from 2 a.m. onwards. So, I came here at 2 a.m. Because of the rains, they have not come yet."

"You will be fined for having come late," said one of the devotees to me. We all laughed.

While we were all seated there chatting, Ramaswamy Pillai and Kuppaswamy Iyer came and stood before the sofa. "Why? Is there any *pārāyana*?" asked Bhagavan. "Yes. It is not yet time for a bath. We shall recite *Thevāram* (Hymns to Lord Siva by three Tamil saints)", said Pillai. Bhagavan agreed and they started to recite. By the time it was over Rangaswamy came there, saying that it was time for his bath. Pillai said he would recite the *Thiruvembāvai* written by Saint Manikkavachakar. "It has twenty stanzas. How can I wait till it is all recited? It is time to go," said Bhagavan, and got ready to go by massaging his legs. "We shall stop presently." So saying Pillai started reciting one stanza beginning with '*Annā-malaiyān*'. The idea contained in it is this: 'Oh! Sakhi (lady companion)! Just as the glitter of the precious stones in the crowns on the heads of the *devatās* who bow to the lotus feet of Lord Arunachala get dim and hidden by the shining of those lotus feet of the Lord, in the same way the rays of the rising sun dispel darkness (in the universe) and dim the light of the shining stars. At that hour, let us sing the praise of those sacred feet of the Lord who is man, woman and neuter, the sky with the heavenly light, all these and yet different from all these, who fills our eyes, nectar-like. Let us bathe and swim in the tank full of flowers, singing in praise of those lotus feet.'

This recital just ended as Bhagavan placed his feet on the ground to go for his bath. As the recitation ended with the words, "Let us bathe! Get up" Bhagavan got up from the sofa, saying "Yes! Here I am, getting up for my bath." We all laughed. Though the Paramatma who is neither

man, woman nor neuter manifested Himself in this universe in the shape of Bhagavan, still in the worship of Lord Arunachaleswara, Bhagavan addressed the Lord with *abalā bhāva* (Feelings of a woman towards her husband). I therefore felt indescribable pride in my sex at this. It appears Manikkavachakar sang those songs when he got the *abalā bhāva* towards the Lord. Bhagavan too wrote his *Aksharamanamāla* with the same *abalā bhāva*. Do you see how exalted a place is accorded to the *abalā bhāva*!

I started writing you this series of letters last year just after the festival of Karthika, on the occasion of the arrival of the procession of Lord Arunachala in front of the Asramam while going round the sacred hill (*Giri pradakshina*) and in the spirit of the Lord's saying that the child is beholden to the father. All those letters were sent for printing the other day.

19th December 1946

(2) *ĀTMĀKĀRAVRITTI*

(The Soul, its shape and action)

The day before yesterday an Andhra gentleman came and handed over to Bhagavan a letter containing the following question : "Some say that the *Jnāni* is in the *Ātmākāravritti* in the sleeping state and others say he is not. What is your opinion?" Bhagavan, in the manner of a Guru, replied : "Let us first learn to be in the *Ātmic* state, in the waking state. There will be time enough then to consider what happens in the sleeping state. Is he who is in the waking state not in the sleeping state as well? Are

you now in *Ātmākāravritti* or in the *Brahmākāravritti*? First tell me that."

"Swamiji! I am not enquiring about myself, but about the *Jnāni*," said the questioner. "Oh! Is that so? That is all right, but you who are asking the question, first know about yourself. The *Jnānis* can look after themselves. We do not know about ourselves but we enquire about *Jnānis*. What does it matter to us whether they are in *Ātmākāravritti* or in *Brahmākāravritti*? If we know about ourselves, the question about them does not arise," replied Bhagavan. "Swamiji, this question is not my own, but is sent to me by a friend," said the questioner.

"Indeed?" said Bhagavan, "friends have asked the question. What are we to reply? When we say *vritti*, duality is implied, isn't it? But that which IS, is only one. The question then arises, 'Without the consciousness of the Supreme Being, how can there be any movement from the past to the present and the future? That is why we have to call it by some name or other, such as *Akhandākāravritti* (*Akhandā*= limitless) or *Ātmākāravritti* or *Brahmākāravritti*, just as we say that the river is *Samudrākāra* (the shape of the ocean). All rivers fall into the ocean, get merged, lose shape and become one with the ocean. That being so, what is the meaning of saying of the river that it is *Samudrākāra*? Has the ocean any shape, such as so much depth and so much width? In the same way, people merely say that the *Jnāni* has *Akhandākāravritti* or *Ātmākāravritti* but, in reality, it is all one. All these are merely replies to questioners, but in the eyes of the *Jnāni* the whole thing is only ONE."

"Have the *Brahmavid*, *Brahmavidvara*, *Brahmavidvareeya* and *Brahmavidvarishta* and others all got a *sātvic*

mind?" some one else asked. "It is all the same whether you say *Brahmavidvarishta*, *Brahmavid* or Brahman itself," Bhagavan replied. "Like Brahman means Brahman itself. We shall have to say that the above three have *sātvic* minds in common parlance but, in fact, there is no such thing as mind for them. *Vāsanās* themselves are the mind. If there are no *vāsanās* there is no mind. That which IS, is *Sat*. *Sat* is Brahman. That is self-luminous. That is Atman, and that is the SELF. Names like *Brahmavid*, *Brahmavid-vareeya*, *Brahmavidvarishta* are given to those men of wisdom who, by self-enquiry, realise the Truth and remain firmly in that Knowledge of the SELF. Their day to day actions are said to be in *Atmākāravritti* or *Akhandākāravritti*."

20th December 1946

(3) *ĀNDAVANE*

A telegram was received at about 9 a.m. today informing us that Ramanatha Brahmachari alias *Āndavane* expired in Madras last night. Some one informed me about it as I was entering the hall. Ramanath joined the band of Bhagavan's disciples when quite young, when Bhagavan was still in Virupāksha cave. After that he never left Bhagavan except for short intervals of about 15 days in the year. This staunch devotee and lifelong *brāhmachāri* went to Madras for treatment and we heard the news of his demise within fifteen days. I entered the hall, feeling sad that it had happened the same way as with Madhawa-swamy some time earlier, and simultaneously feeling grati-

fied that he had left his skeleton-like body without much suffering, when Bhagavan said to me, "It seems that our Ramnath is gone." Once before, when Madhawaswamy died and Bhagavan told me, "Madhawaswamy has gone," and I asked him, "Where to," Bhagavan replied, "Where to? There, leaving his body here." So I did not ask him again this time, "Where to?" but merely replied, "Yes. I have heard so."

In the afternoon at 3 p.m. two ladies, Uma and Alamu, began to sing the Tamil verses "*Ramana Anubhūti*." Bhagavan told me with some feeling, "Look! These are verses written by Ramnath himself; there is also another song with the *pallavi* (refrain) '*Thiruchulināthanai Kandene*.' That also was written by him. There is an interesting story in this connection. During my stay in Virupāksha cave, on one full moon day we all started out on a *Giri pradakshina*. Chidambaram Subramanya Iyer was here at that time. The moonlight was bright and all were in high spirits. They all decided to hold a meeting and each person was to deliver a lecture on a different subject. Subramanya Iyer was elected chairman of the meeting. The first lecture was by Ramnath. The topic chosen by him was "The Similarity between the Paramatma dwelling in the cave of the human heart, Lord Nataraja in Chidambaram and Sri Ramana in Virupāksha cave." The chairman allowed him half an hour. There was no end to the points of similarity elucidated by him. So many comparisons were being drawn. When the chairman declared that the time was up, Ramnath said, "Just half an hour more please." It was a meeting of people who were continuously walking. Saying, "A little more time, sir, a little more," he went on with his speech for full three hours, when the chairman firmly

put a stop to his further talking. You should have seen the enthusiasm with which he spoke that day. Subsequently, he summarised the points of the lecture into a song of four stanzas entitled, "*Thiruchulinathanai Kandene*." Since the words "*Āndavane*" had occurred in the song several times, Ramnath himself began to be called '*Āndavane*'. Pranavanandaji attempted to translate the song into Telugu but the translation did not come out well.

"Oh! Is that the reason why he is called '*Āndavane*'?" I said and read the song. Though it may not be much from a literary viewpoint, it was pleasant to hear it as it was composed with fullness of heart. Its purport is as follows :—

"I saw Thiruchulināthan * and, being unable to turn back, stood there transfixed. He is the Lord that dances in Chidambaram, and that protects the helpless and is merciful to them. The same Thiruchulināthan manifested himself as God in Virupāksha cave on the hill in the sacred Tiruvannamalai.

"*Jiva* was ruling unjustly in the town called *Kāyapuri*, with the *karanās* as his subjects and *ahankāra* as his minister.

"After some time, *Jiva* took up the sword of God's grace and cut off the head of his minister, *ahankāra*.

"Having so cut off the minister's head, *Jiva* stood with God who was dancing all by himself in the cave called *Daharālaya*.

"He is this Thiruchulināthan; I saw him and stayed there, being unable to come away."

* Thiruchuli is the village in South India in which Bhagavan was born; it is also said to signify '*Srikara*' and '*Omkār*'.

24th January 1947

(4) *OMKĀRAM — AKSHARAM*

Recently, as I was returning home from the Asramam one evening at about 5 p.m., I heard two young men discussing. One of them said: "I questioned Ramana Maharshi very boldly as to what remains after the *Omkāram* is crossed. He was unable to reply and so closed his eyes and slept. It is all a pose with him."

Though, at the outset, I got angry at their speaking disparagingly about my Guru, I subsequently felt amused at their foolishness and said in a mild tone: "Sir, why do you decry your elders? Do we know, first of all, what *Omkāram* is, that we should venture to ask what remains after *Omkāram*?" The young man replied, "I asked him only because I do not know. Why should he not reply suitably?" I said, "Please do not be impatient. If you ask him once again, with patience, you will know." They went away but were present in the hall the next day. Unexpectedly, some one else questioned Bhagavan thus: "Swamiji, it is said that *Akāra*, *Ukāra*, *Makāras* make up *Omkāram*. What is the meaning of these three letters? What is the embodiment of *Omkāram*?"

Bhagavan replied: "*Omkāram* itself is Brahman. That Brahman is the nameless and formless pure SAT. It is that that is called *Omkāram*. *Akāra*, *Ukāra*, *Makāra* or *Sat*, *Chit*, *Ananda*—any three of these two groups, is Brahman. *Omkāram* which is beyond the speech or the mind and which can only be experienced, cannot be described by word of mouth, one cannot say what its *swarūpa* (shape) is." This reply also served to clear the doubts of the two youths who questioned him yesterday evening.

Similarly, someone or other used to ask Bhagavan, now and then, "What is the form of *Akshara*? What does it look like? How can we know it?" Bhagavan's reply to all such questions was: "In accordance with the saying in the Gita, '*aksharam brahma paramam*' that which is supreme and permanent is the form of *Akshara*. As for the question how we can know it, the SELF is *Akshara*. The question how to know *Akshara* would arise only if *Akshara* were different from the Self. But the two are not different, but only one. The essential *Vastu* (thing) is only one, and that is SAT. That SAT is SELF; there is nothing other than the Self. To enquire and know who the Self is and for the Self to stand by itself — that is the correct way."

25th January 1947

(5) ANECDOTES REGARDING LIFE AT VIRUPĀKSHA CAVE

Vasudeva Sastry who used to look after the routine work while Bhagavan was in Virupāksha cave, came to the Asramam the other day and sat down in the presence of Bhagavan. After the preliminary enquiries about mutual welfare, Bhagavan told us that it was this Sastry who started the *Jayanthi* celebrations. A devotee asked, "Is he the person who got frightened, and hid when a tiger appeared?" "Yes. It is he," Bhagavan replied, "During our stay in Virupāksha cave, we were all seated on the front verandah one night when a tiger appeared in the valley below. We put a lantern outside the railings of the verandah as we thought that the tiger would not approach us

because of the light. Śastry however was very afraid. He therefore crept into the cave and asked us also to do likewise ; but we refused. After entering the cave, he bolted the iron-barred door and from there tried to frighten the tiger, like a great warrior, saying, "Look ! If you come this way, take care. Take care of what I'll do. Yes ! What do you think ? Bhagavan is here ! Take care." All these heroics were from inside the cave and were like those of Uttarakumāra (in the *Mahābhārata* story). The tiger loitered about for a while and then went its own way. Śastry then ventured to come out — a very brave man indeed," said Bhagavan.

Śastry took up the thread of the conversation and said, "That was not the only occasion. Another time, in broad daylight, Swamiji and I were seated on a rock outside the cave. In the valley below, a tiger and a leopard were playing with each other and Bhagavan was smiling as he watched the friendly movements of the two animals. I was however in a terrible fright and requested Bhagavan to come into the cave. He was adamant and sat there motionless. As for myself, I sought the shelter of the cave. The two animals played about for a while, looked at Swamiji, in the same way as pets do, and without any fear or expression of anger, went their own way, one going up the hill and the other down. When I came out of the cave and asked, "Swamiji, weren't you afraid when the two animals were playing about so close to you ?" Bhagavan said with a smile, "Why have fear ? I knew as I saw them that, after a while, one of them would go up the hill and the other down. And they did. If we get frightened and say, 'Oh ! A tiger !', they will also get frightened and say, 'Oh ! A man !' and will rush forward to kill us. If we do not have

that fear, they too will not have any fear, and will then move about freely and peacefully," "In spite of all that Bhagavan said to me," Sastry added, "my fear never left me."

"It was Sastry who embraced me and wept when my heart stopped beating," said Bhagavan and narrated the incident thus "One day I went to the tank in front of Pachiamman Koil with Vasu and others for a bath, and we were returning by a short cut, when, as we approached the tortoise rock, I felt tired and giddy and so sat down on the rock. My experience at that time have been recorded in my biography,* as you all know," said Bhagavan.

* Relative extracts from the biography are given below :—

The tortoise rock was a huge boulder lying in the way. Bhagavan's experiences near that rock were narrated by him in these words :

"Suddenly the view of nature in front of me disappeared and got covered up like a sheet of white cloth. But the disappearance of the one, and the appearance of the other was gradual so that part of the one and part of the other appeared before me the same time. But soon after, the view of nature disappeared completely and I stopped walking. I resumed the walk as the sight of the whiteness disappeared completely. It happened a second time and my physical weakness increased. I had therefore to lean on the tortoise rock for support. As it happened again a third time, I sat on the rock. All around me was the view of the white cloth. My head was reeling. The circulation of blood and the beating of the heart stopped, and my body began to get dark in colour, same as what happens to a dead body, and as that slowly increased, Vasu thought that I was really dead and began to weep, and embraced me. The change in my body's colour, Vasu's embrace, the shivering of his body, and the talks of the others around me—I was conscious of all these. I was also conscious of my hands and feet getting chill, and the stopping of the beats of my heart, but I had no fear in me. The flow of my thoughts and the consciousness of my self were not lost and I was not worried about my body's condition. I sat cross-legged in the *padmasanam* pose. I was not leaning on the rock behind. The circulation of blood stopped but the *Asanabandha* (sitting posture) remained intact. All that lasted for about fifteen minutes.

"Suddenly energy permeated throughout my body. The circulation of blood and the beating of the heart commenced. The black

Taking up the thread of the conversation, Sastry said: "Yes. While all else stood at a distance weeping, I suddenly embraced him. I was a bachelor at the time and had the liberty to do so. No one else used to touch Swami's body. He was in that state for about ten minutes, I think, and then gained consciousness. I jumped about with joy. 'Why this weeping? You thought I was dead? If I am to die; will I not tell you before hand?' Bhagavan said, consoling us."

26th January 1947

(6) SIVA BHAKTA SUNDARAMŪRTHY

Yesterday Bhagavan was going through *Thiruchuli Purānam*, and in the course of his talk, he spoke thus regarding the events connected with the visit of Sundaramurthy to this holy place:—

"The venerable Sundaramurthy, born in the *amsa* of Aalaala Sundara, who emanated from the reflection of Lord Siva the Somasekhara (with moon in his crown), acquired the friendship of the Kerala king, Cheramān Perumāl Nainār, in the course of his wanderings as a pilgrim. Then they both went to Madurai on pilgrimage. The Pandyan king as well as his son-in-law, the Chola king, extended a

colour of my body disappeared. I began to perspire profusely from all pores in my body. I opened my eyes, got up and said, 'Come on. Let us go.' We then reached the Virupaksha Cave without any further incidents. Only on that occasion did my heart and breath stop functioning at the same time. I did not bring the state on me wantonly; nor was it a desire on my part to see how the body would look like after death. I had such experiences before. It was more virulent that time. That is all."

very warm welcome to them and expressed their happiness at being their hosts. Sundaramurthy worshipped God Sundaeswara the husband of the goddess Meenakshi and offered praises to the god with his poetic skill. Accompanied by the Chera king he visited and worshipped at the sacred shrines of the south, namely Thirukuttralam, Thirunelveli, and Rameswaram. From there he visited the sacred shrine of Thirukkedeswara in Lanka Dwipa (Ceylon) and offered worship. There he remembered Thirulapuram (Thiruchuli) which is the Muktinagar (city of salvation) and proceeded thither. As they approached that city, the crowds saw them both resplendent as though the sun and the moon appeared at the same time. Sundaramurthy was happy to have the *darshan* of Lord Bhuminatha and offered worship with the song beginning '*Unāyi Uyir Puhālāi*' and was overwhelmed with devotion. He decided to stay in that holy place for a while, and resided in the Mutt on the bank of the river Kowndinya.

"One night during his stay there, Lord Siva appeared to him in a dream with a ball in his hand (ball is the symbol of kingship) and a crown on his head, as a youth of incomparable beauty and with a smile dancing on his lips, and said, 'We stay in Jyotivana (Kaleswara)'. On hearing these words, Sundaramurthy woke up with excitement, and recollected the glorious kindness of the Lord who appeared and showered benevolence on him, and narrated the wonderful vision to the Chera king with joy. There and then he sang, overwhelmed with devotion, the *Thevāra Pathikam* commencing with the words, '*Thondar Adithodalalum*' on Lord Kaleswar.

"From there they started to visit the far off holy place, Thiruppunavāyil, and even as they started, God Kaleswara,

who had appeared in the dream of Sundaramurthy, and Amba approached them in the guise of an old Brahmin couple. When Sundaramurthy asked them, 'Who are you? Where do you come from?' they replied, 'We shall talk about that later. First give us food. We are hungry.' Sundaramurthy consented and got food prepared and looked for the couple to serve it to, but they were not to be seen anywhere. All the lanes and by-lanes of the village were searched but they could not be found anywhere. They came back to the Mutt only to find that the food that was cooked had all disappeared and the leaves in which the food was eaten were thrown all over the yard. Sundaramurthy was wonderstruck and exclaimed, 'Ah! What a wonder is this! What can this be except the *Leela* (game) of the Lord of the Universe?' As he arrived at this conclusion, he heard an invisible voice: 'Where do you intend going without seeing us that reside in the Jyotivana?' Sundaramurthy was wondering where that Jyotivana was and how to go there, when the invisible voice once again said, 'We are proceeding there on the vehicle of the sacred bull Nandi. You may also come there, following its footsteps.'

"Sundaramurthy followed the footsteps accompanied by the devotees there; but suddenly the track disappeared. As he stood there in confusion, the invisible voice was heard to say, 'Look carefully.' As he followed carefully the footsteps he saw a particular place full of Siva Lingas. There was no space even for a single step forward and he and the other devotees stood there in confusion. Suddenly he saw a narrow footpath and they went along it, on and on until at last they beheld the temple of Kaleswara. They all took their bath in the tank in front of temple and,

as they were thinking of going into it, all on a sudden, the temple with its tower disappeared. Sundaramurthy was wonderstruck and sang some songs in praise of the Lord, conveying the idea 'Is this the result of my not having come for worship in your temple before bathing?' At once, a whole view of *Jyoti* (light) appeared and the peak view of a temple tower and then the temple itself with its compound wall. He was overjoyed, had a *darshan* of God, worshipped him and sang songs in praise of him, and then proceeded on his pilgrimage. This is a wonderful story. There are many more stories of him," said Bhagavan.

He is the same Sundaramurthy that was referred to in my letter printed earlier under the heading, "Swami is everywhere," (No. 70, Part I). His story is given in detail in the Sanskrit works "*Siva Bhaktha Vilāsam*", "*Upamanyu Bhaktha Vilāsam*" and in the Telugu works, "*Panditha-radhyā Charitra*" and "*Basava Purānam*" of the poet Palakurthi Somanatha.

Bhagavan told us once before that the devotion of Sundaramurthy to the Lord is that of a friend, of Manikkavachakar that of the beloved, of Appar that of a servant, and Sambandar that of a son.

27th January 1947

(7) SUNDARAMŪRTHY'S BOND OF SERVITUDE

Yesterday, after hearing Bhagavan's narration of Sundaramurthy's story, which I have mentioned in my letter to you, I was desirous of hearing the story of that devotee's younger days and so went to Bhagavan's presence early this

morning at 7-30 a.m. Bhagavan had already returned from the hill and was reading some book. There were not many people in the hall at that time. Having made my obeisance, I asked Bhagavan what the book was that he was reading. He replied, "*Peria Purānam*. I am just going through the story of the younger days of Sundaramurthy." "It is all very interesting, isn't it?" I asked. "Yes. Would you like to read it?" asked Bhagavan. "I should very much like to but I do not know Tamil sufficiently well," I replied. "All right. I will tell you the story briefly," said Bhagavan and, with a smile, proceeded with the story as follows :

"Sundaramurthy was born in the sacred place, Tirunavanur in Thirumunaippadi country in the Siva Brahmana caste called *Ādi Saivam*, to the Siva priest called Chadayanar alias Sivachārya and his wife Isaijnāniyār. He was named by his parents Nambiyārūr. One day, while he was playing in the street with a toy cart, the king of the place, by name Narasinga Muniyar, saw him and took a fancy to him. He requested the father, Sivachārya, to let him have the boy. The father agreed and the boy was being brought up by the king as his foster son. Even so, the Brahminical usages as regards thread ceremony and *vedic* instructions were carefully observed and he became well-versed in all the arts.

"When he came of age, his marriage with the daughter of a relative by name Chatangavi Sivachārya was decided upon, and invitations were issued to all relatives for the function. Sundaramurthy went through the usual pre-marital ceremonies a day before the marriage, and on the marriage day proceeded properly dressed as the bridegroom along with his relatives, to the bride's father's house in Puttur village on horseback quite early in the morning. On reaching the bride's house, he alighted from the horse and sat on

the wedding seat in the marriage pandal in accordance with the usual custom. Drums were sounded and the arrival of the bride was awaited.

“Just then, Lord Siva approached the marriage pandal in the garb of an old Brahmin, and announced, ‘All of you please listen to what I have to say.’ On their assenting, the old man told the boy, ‘Look here, there is an agreement between you and me. First fulfil it and then marry.’ The boy replied, ‘If there is an agreement, let it be so but tell us first what it is.’ The old Brahmin told the audience, ‘Sirs, this boy is my servant. I have with me the deed of service executed by his grandfather in my favour.’ Sundaramurthy replied, ‘Oh ! Madman, Enough ! We are hearing for the first time that a Brahmin is the servant of another Brahmin. Go, get away !’ The Brahmin replied, ‘I am neither a madman nor a devil. I am not offended at your remarks. You have not understood me at all. Stop this childish talk and come and serve me.’ Sundaramurthy then said, ‘Show me the deed.’ ‘Who are you to decide after seeing the deed ?’ said the old man. ‘If the people in the audience see the deed and agree that it is true, you should begin to serve me.’ Sundaramurthy got very angry and pounced upon the man to snatch the deed from him. The Brahmin however ran away but the boy pursued him, snatched the deed at last, and tore it to pieces. The old man caught hold of Sundaramurthy and began shouting. The marriage guests got agitated over that, separated the two and said to the Brahmin, ‘You are speaking of arrangements unheard of in this world. Oh ! Quarrelsome old man ! Where do you come from ?’ The Brahmin replied, ‘I belong to the village of Thiruvannainallur. Don’t you agree that this boy Nambiyarurar has confirmed his servitude to me by unjustly

snatching away the service deed from my hands and tearing it to pieces?' Sundarar replied, 'If indeed you are a resident of Thiruvennainallur village, your claim can be decided there can't it?' The Brahmin replied, 'Yes. Come with me. I shall produce the original deed before the Council of Brahmins there and establish my claim that you are my servant.' Accordingly, the Brahmin walked ahead and Sundaramurthy and all the other Brahmins followed him.

"As soon as they all reached the Council of Brahmins in the other village, the cunning old Brahmin filed his claim petition before them to the effect that the boy Nambiyarurar tore up the service deed in his favour. The councillors said, 'We have not heard anywhere in this world that Brahmins become servants of Brahmins.' The Brahmin replied, 'No. Mine is not a false claim. The deed that this boy tore up is the deed of service executed by his grandfather to the effect that he and all his successors are to be my servants.' The councillors asked Sundaramurthy, 'Can you win your case by merely tearing up the deed executed by your grandfather? What do you say?' He replied, 'Oh virtuous men, learned in all the vedic lore! You all know that I am an Adi Saiva. Even if this old Brahmin is able to establish that I am his servant, you must please consider it as a piece of magic, beyond the reach of mental reasoning. What can I say of such a claim?' The councillors told the Brahmin, 'You must first prove to us that he is your servant. To decide an affair of this nature, three things are needed, custom, written evidence and oral evidence. Should you not produce at least one of these three items?' The Brahmin replied, 'Sir! what he tore up is only the duplicate copy; the original deed is with me.' The councillors demanded the production of the original deed, and

gave him an assurance that it would not be torn up by Sundaramurthy. The old man took out the original deed from the folds of the cloth around his waist, and showed it to them. The village *Karnam* who happened to come there unexpectedly then, was asked to read it. He bowed before the councillors, opened the folds of the original document and so as to be heard by all, he read it out aloud as follows : 'I, Adi Saiva by caste and Arurar by name, residing in Thiruvonnainallur village have executed this deed of service gladly and out of my own free will, undertaking to do service by me and by my successive descendants, to *pitthan* (mad man) residing in Thiruvonnainallur village, (Sd.) Arurar.

"The witnesses to the deed were those very councillors, and they all identified and confirmed that the signatures were their own. The councillors asked Sundaramurthy to verify if the handwriting in the deed was his grandfather's. The man pretending to be a Brahmin said, 'Sir ! This is a mere boy. How can he identify his grandfather's writing ? If there is any other paper available, containing his grandfather's writing, please send for it, and compare.' They all agreed, and the relatives of Sundaramurthy searched, and produced a paper containing his grandfather's hand-writing. The councillors compared the two papers, and confirmed that the writings in the two papers agreed. They told Sundaramurthy 'Boy ! There is no way of escape for you. You have lost. It is your duty to do service according to this old man's orders.' Sundaramurthy was stupefied at this and said that he would obey the order, if fate had decreed that way. They had compassion on the boy, and had still some doubts about the Brahmin, and questioned him, 'Sir ! This deed says that you belong to this very village. Can you show us where your ancestral house and property and all

that are ?' The Brahmin pretended surprise, and said, 'What ! You are all of this village, so learned, so intelligent, so elderly—does not even one among you know my house ? How surprising are your words ! Come with me then !' So saying, he led the way, and they all followed. They all saw the God in disguise enter the Siva's temple called 'Thiruvarul Thurai' in the village, and were stupefied.

"Sundaramurthy thought : 'The Brahmin who made me his servant has entered the temple of my God Parameswara ! What a wonder !' So thinking, he followed alone, eagerly, the footsteps of the Brahmin and entered the temple with great desire and shouted, 'Oh Brahmin !' At once Lord Siva appeared in the company of Goddess Parvathi, seated on the sacred Bull, and said, 'My son ! You are Aalaala Sundara, one of my *Pramatha Ganās* (chief attendants), you were born here as a result of a curse. You requested me to have you as My own, wherever you might be, even during the period of the curse. I therefore made you my servant here."

Thus Bhagavan narrated to us the earlier story of Sundaramurthy. He continued :

"As soon as Sundaramurthy heard those words of the Great Lord, he was overjoyed like the calf that heard the mother-cow's call. With his voice trembling with emotion and eyes filled with tears of joy, he made prostrations to Him, and with folded hands said, 'Oh Lord ! You are gracious to my worthless self, hold me fast to you like the cat holding on to its kitten, and make me your own. What gracious kindness !' and praised Him. The Great Lord was pleased and said, 'My son ! Because you have disputed with me, you shall have the name of '*Van Thondan*'. The service

to be rendered hereafter by you to me, is to worship me with flowers of verses. Compose verses on me, and sing them.' With folded hands, Sundaramurthy said, 'Oh Lord! You came in the guise of a Brahmin, and preferred a claim against me, and I contested and argued with you, not knowing your greatness. You are the great Lord that gave me recollection of my past, and saved me from falling into worldly actions and behaviour and getting drowned therein. What do I know of your limitless great qualities, and what shall I sing of them?' Iswara said, 'You already called me *Pitthan*, madman. Therefore, sing of me as the Mad Man,' so saying, he disappeared. Sundaramurthy immediately sang the Sri Padikam, commencing with the verse, "*Pitthā pirai sūdi.*" His story is full of such strange experiences, said Bhagavan.

I asked, "Is he named Sundaramurthy as the result of the recollection of his past?" "Yes, yes! No other reason is to be found in his story!" replied Bhagavan.

28th January 1947

(8) NATURE

This afternoon at 3 o'clock an Englishman asked Bhagavan something in English in which the word "Nature" occurred a number of times and Bhagavan replied as follows :

"These questions would not arise if one knew one's own nature well. They will continue to arise till one does know. Until then we will be under the delusion that all these unnatural things are natural. We have to understand that the

true state is always there and at all times. We discard that which is there, and wish for that which is not there, and suffer on that account. All that comes and goes is unreal. The soul always remains in its natural place. As long as we do not realise that truth, we suffer."

"Where can we see this soul? How can we know it?" was the next question.

"Where can we see the soul? This question is like staying in Ramanasramam, and asking where is Ramanasramam. The soul is at all times in you and everywhere and to imagine that it is somewhere far off and search for it, is like performing Panduranga *Bhajan*. This *Bhajan* commences in the first quarter of the night with tinkling bells tied to the feet of the devotees and with the brass lamp-stand placed in the centre of the house. The devotees go round and round the lamp-stand, dancing rhythmically to the tune, 'Pandarpur is thus far! Pandarpur is thus far! Come on! proceed,' but as they go round and round, they actually do not proceed even half a yard further. By the time the third quarter of the night is reached, they will begin to sing, 'See! there is Pandarpur. Here is Pandarpur. See, see!' During the first quarter of the night they were going round the same lamp as now in the third quarter. It dawns, and they sing, 'We have arrived at Pandarpur. This is Pandarpur,' and so saying, salute the same lamp stand and end the *Bhajan*. It is the same with this also. We go round and round in search of *ātma* (soul) saying, 'Where is *ātma*? Where is it?' till at last the dawn of *jñāna drishti* (vision of knowledge) is reached, and we say, 'this is *ātma*, this is me.' We should acquire that vision. When once that vision is reached, there will be no attach-

ments even if the *Jnāni* mixes with the world and moves about in it. When once you put on shoes your feet do not feel the pain of walking on any number of stones or thorns on the way. You walk about without fear or care, whether there be mountains or hillocks on the way. In the same way, everything will be natural to those who have attained the *jñāna drishti*. What is there apart from one's own self?

"That natural state can be known only after all this worldly vision subsides. But how is it to subside?" was the next question. Bhagavan replied, "If the mind subsides, the whole world subsides. Mind is the cause of all this. If that subsides, the natural state presents itself. The soul proclaims itself at all times as 'I', 'I'. It is self-luminous! It is here. All this is that. We are in that only. Being in it, why search for it? The ancients say :

द्विष्टिं ज्ञानमयीं कृत्वा पश्येत् ब्रह्ममयं जगत् ।

"Making the vision absorbed in *Jñāna* one sees the world as Brahman."

"It is said that *Chidākāsa* itself is *Ātma Swarūpa* (image of *ātma*) and that we can view it only with the help of the mind. How can we see it, if the mind has subsided?" Some one else asked. Bhagavan said : "If the sky is taken as an illustration it must be stated to be of three varieties, *chidākāsa*, *chittākāsa* and, *bhūthākāsa*," Bhagavan replied. "The natural state is called *chidākāsa*, the I feeling that is born from *chidākāsa* is *chittākāsa*. As that *chittākāsa* expands and takes the shape of all the *bhūtās* (elements) this is all *bhūthākāsa*. After all the mind is a part of the body, is it? When the *chittākāsa* which is consciousness of the self 'I', does

not see the *chidākāsa* but sees the *bhūthākāsa* it is said to be *mano ākāsa*; and when it leaves *mano ākāsa* and sees *chidākāsa* it is said to be *chinmaya*.* “The subsiding of the mind means, the idea of multiplicity of object vanishes, and the idea of oneness of objects appears. When that is achieved everything appears natural.”

In accordance with this idea, Bhagavan has written in his *Unnadhi Nalubadhi*, (verse 14): “If it is said that there is the first person ‘I’ then there are the second and third persons ‘you’ and ‘he’. When the real nature of the first person is known and the ‘I’ feeling disappears, the ‘you’ and the ‘he’ disappear simultaneously, and that which shines as the only One becomes the natural state of the ultimate reality.”

29th January 1947

(9) WHO IS RAMANA ?

On the 7th of this month Dr. T. N. Krishnaswamy, a devotee of Bhagavan, celebrated the Jayanthi of Sri Ramana in Madras. It seems a Pandit mentioned in the course of his lecture on the occasion that there was a reference somewhere that Bhattapada would be born in Thiruchuli as Ramana. While the devotees in the Asramam were searching for these references, Bhagavan himself said, “Nāyanā

चित्तं विदिति जानीयात् त-कार रहितं यथा ।

त-कारो विषयाध्यासः जपारागो यथा मणौ ॥

—Sankara's *Sadacharanu Sandhanam*.

When there are no thoughts, *chitta* is *chinmaya*.

(Kavya Kantha Ganapathi Sastry), said that Skanda (Lord Subramanya) was born first as Bhattapāda, then as Sambandha (Thirujnanasambandhar), and in the third birth as Ramana. The appellation, '*drāvida sisuhu*' used by Sri Sankara in '*Soundarya Lahari*' refers to Sambandha, doesn't it? Therefore Sambandha must have existed prior to Bhattapada who was a contemporary of Sankara. Nāyanā said that Sambandha was of a later date than Bhattapada. One is not consistent with the other; which of the above versions is the authority for the aforesaid lecturer's statement is not yet known."

Surprised at these words which were meant to throw everyone off his guard, I said, "Why so much discussion about it? We may ask Bhagavan himself. Doesn't Bhagavan know who He is? Even if He does not tell us now there is His own reply to the song asking, 'Who is Ramana?' written by Amritanatha Yatindra while Bhagavan was dwelling on the Hill." Bhagavan replied, "Yes - yes!" with the smile of approval on His face, waited for a while, and then said, "Amritanatha is a peculiar person. He is very interested in all matters. When I was on the Hill he used to come now and then, and stay with me. One day I went somewhere. By the time I returned, he had composed a verse in Malayalam, asking 'Who is Ramana?' left it there and went out. I wondered what was written on the paper, so I looked at it and found out. By the time he returned I composed another verse in reply, in Malayalam, wrote it down below his verse and put the paper back. He likes to attribute supernatural powers to me. He did so when he wrote my biography in Malayalam, Nāyanā had it read out to him, and after hearing it, tore it off, saying, 'Enough! enough!' That was the reason for

his posing this question also. He wanted to attribute some supernatural powers to me, as 'Hari' or 'Yathi' or 'Vararuchi' or 'Isa Guru'. I replied in the manner stated in the verse. What could they do? They could not answer. A Telugu translation of those verses is available, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is. Isn't Bhagavan's own version enough for us to establish that Bhagavan is Paramatma himself?" I said. Bhagavan smiled, and lapsed into *mouna* (silence).

I give below the prose translation of those Malayali verses given in '*Ramana Lilā*' :

Amritanatha's question : "Who is this Ramana in the Arunachala cave, who is renowned as the treasure of compassion? Is he Vararuchi or Isa Guru? or Hari? or Yatindra? I am desirous of knowing the Guru's *Mahima* (supernatural powers)."

Bhagavan's reply : "Arunachala Ramana is the Paramatma Himself who plays about as Consciousness in the hearts of all living beings, from Hari downwards. He is the Supreme Being. It will be clear to you if you open the eye of *Jnāna* and see the truth."

30th January 1947

(10) *DRĀVIDA SISUHU*

Yesterday Bhagavan said that Sankara sang about Sambandha in '*Soundarya Lahari*' referring to him as '*drāvida sisuhu*', didn't he? Last night I took out '*Soundarya Lahari*' with a Telugu commentary and saw the

sloka written by Sankara about Sambandha which is as follows :

तवस्तन्यं मन्ये घरणिघरकन्ये हृदयतः
 पयः पारावारः परिवहति सारस्वतमिव ।
 दयावत्या दत्तं द्राविडशिशुराखाद्य तुवय-
 त्कवीनां प्रौढानामजनि कमनीयः कवयिता । ७५

“O Daughter of the Mountain, I fancy that the ocean of the milk of poesy rising out of Thy heart verily caused the milk of Thy breasts to flow. On swallowing this milk given by thy grace, the Dravidian child became a poet among great poets.”

The Telugu commentary stated that the word ‘*drāvida sisuhu*’ in the *sloka* meant Sankara himself. I mentioned this to Bhagavan next day. Bhagavan replied, “the Telugu commentators must have stated it wrongly. The Tamil ‘*Soundarya Lahari*’ stated that the words ‘*drāvida sisuhu*’ meant Sambandha and not Sankara ;” and he sent for the Tamil book and read out all that was written in it about the reason for Sambandha receiving the title of ‘*drāvida sisuhu*’, and explained it to us as follows :

“Sambandha was born in an orthodox Brahmin family in the town of Sirkali, to Sivapada Hridayar and his wife Bhagawatiyar. The parents named him Āludaya Pillayar. One day, when the boy was three years old, the father took him to Thiruttoni Appar Koil. While immersed in the tank for a bath, he began repeating the *aghamarshaṇa mantram*. When the child could not see the father in the tank, it looked around with fear and grief. There was no trace of the father. It could not contain its grief and so wept aloud looking at the temple chariot saying, ‘Father ! Mother !’

Parvati and Lord Siva then appeared in the sky, seated on the sacred Bull and gave *darshan* to that little child. Siva directed Pārvathi to give the boy a golden cupful of her breast milk, the milk containing *Siva Jnāna* (Knowledge of Siva). She did accordingly. The boy drank the milk and became free from sorrow, and the divine couple disappeared.

“Having drunk the milk of *Jnāna*, and feeling quite satisfied and happy, Sambandha sat on the tank bund with milk dribbling from the corners of his mouth. When the father came out from his bath, he saw the boy's condition and angrily asked, flourishing a cane, ‘Who gave you milk? Can you drink milk given by strangers? Tell me who that person is or I will beat you.’ Sambandha immediately replied by singing ten Tamil verses beginning with :

“தோடுடைய செவியன்விடையேறிஞர் தூவெண்மதிசூடி...”

“The gist of the first verse is : ‘The Man with Kundalas (sacred ear-rings), the Man who rides the sacred Bull, the Man who has the white moon on his head, the Man whose body is smeared with the ashes of the burning ghat, the thief who has stolen my heart, he who came to bless Brahma, the Creator, when Brahma, with the Vedas in his hand, did penance and he who occupies the sacred seat of Brahmapuri, he, my Father, is there, and she, my Mother who gave me milk, is there!’ So saying he described the forms of Siva and Pārvathi as he witnessed with his eyes and who gave him milk to drink, and also pointed towards the temple, chariot.

“It was clear from the verses, that the people who gave milk to the child were no other than Parvathi and Lord Siva. People gathered round. From that day onwards, the boy's poetic flow began to run unimpeded. That is

why Sankara sang, *Thava Stanyarh Manye*. The commentators therefore decided that the word 'drāvida sisuhu' referred to Sambandha alone. Nayana also wrote of him as 'drāvida sisuhu' in Sri Ramana Gita."

1st February 1947

(11) JNĀNA SAMBANDHAMURTHY

After Bhagavan had read out from the Tamil commentary of *Soundarya Lahari* and told us that the words *drāvida sisuhu* referred to Sambandha himself, the discussion on that subject continued in the Hall for the subsequent 2 or 3 days. In this connection a devotee asked Bhagavan one day, "Sambandha's original name was Āludaya Pillayar wasn't it? When did he get the other name 'Jnāna Sambandhamurthy?' and why?" Bhagavan replied, "As soon as he drank the milk given by the Goddess, *Jnāna Sambandha* (contact with Knowledge), was established for him, and he got the name Jnāna Sambandhamurthy Nayanar. That means, he became a *Jnāni* without the usual relationship of Guru and disciple. Hence, people all over the neighbourhood began to call him by that name from that day onwards. That is the reason."

I said, "Bhagavan too acquired knowledge, without the aid of a Guru in human form?" "Yes! yes! That is why Krishnayya brought out so many points of similarities between Sambandha and myself," said Bhagavan.

"In Sri Ramana Lila it is stated, that while Sambandha was coming to Tiruvannamalai the forest tribes robbed him

of his possessions. He was a man of wisdom and knowledge. What property had he?" I asked. "Oh! that! He followed the path of devotion, didn't he? Therefore he had golden bells and a pearl palanquin and other symbols of that nature according to the injunctions of Ishwara. He had also a Mutt (an establishment) and all that a Mutt requires," said Bhagavan. "Is that so? When did he get all those?" I asked.

Bhagavan replied with a voice full of emotion, "From the time when he acquired the name of Jnāna Sambandha, that is, even from his childhood, he used to sing with uninterrupted poetic flow and go on pilgrimage. He first visited a holy place called Thirukolakka, went into the temple there, sang verses in praise of the Lord, beating time with his little hands. God appreciated it and gave him a pair of golden bells for beating time. From that day onwards the golden bells were in his hands whatever he sang and wherever he went. Thereafter he visited Chidambaram and other holy places and then went to a pilgrim centre called Maranpadi. There were no trains in those days, you see. The presiding deity in that place observed this little boy visiting holy places on foot. So His heart melted with pity, and He created a pearl palanquin, a pearl umbrella and other accompaniments bedecked with pearls suitable for *sanyāsis*, left them in the temple, appeared to the Brahmin priests there and to Sambandha in their dreams and told the Brahmins, 'Give them to Sambandha with proper honours,' and told Sambandha, 'The Brahmins will give you all these: take them.' As they were gifts from Gods he could not refuse them. So Sambandha accepted with reverential salutations by doing *pradakshina* etc. and then got into the palanquin. From that time onwards, he

used to go about in that palanquin wherever he went. Gradually some staff gathered around him and a Mutt was established. But whenever he approached a holy place, he used to alight from the palanquin as soon as he saw the *gopura* (tower) of the shrine and from there onwards, he travelled on foot until he entered the place. He came here on foot from Tirukoilur observing the same principle since, as you know, the peak of Arunagiri temple is visible from there."

A Tamil devotee said that that visit was not clearly mentioned in *Periapurānam* to which Bhagavan replied as follows :—

"No. It is not in *Periapurānam*. But it is stated in Upamanyu's *Sivabhaktivilāsam* in Sanskrit. Sambandha worshipped Virateswara in Arakandanallur and won the god's favour with his verses and then he worshipped Athulyanatheswara in the same way. From there he beheld the peak of Arunagiri and sang verses out of excess of joy and installed an image of Arunachaleswara in the same spot. While he was seated there on a *mandapam*, God Arunachaleswara appeared to him first in the shape of a *Jyoti* (light) and then in the shape of an old Brahmin. Sambandha did not know who that old Brahmin was. The Brahmin had in his hand a flower basket. Unaccountably, Sambandha's mind was attracted towards that Brahmin like a magnet. He at once asked him with folded hands, 'Where do you come from?' 'I have just come from Arunachalam. My village is here, nearby,' replied the Brahmin. Sambandha asked him in surprise, 'Arunachala! But how long ago did you come here?' The Brahmin replied indifferently 'How long ago? Daily I come here in the morning to gather flowers to make a garland for Lord Arunachala and

return there by the afternoon.' Sambandha was surprised and said, 'Is that so? But they said it is very far from here?' The old Brahmin said, 'Who told you so? You can reach there in one stride. What is there great in it?' Having heard that, Sambandha became anxious to visit Arunachala and asked, 'If so, can I walk there?' The old man replied, 'Ah! If an aged man like myself goes there and comes here daily, can't a youth like you do it? What are you saying?'

"With great eagerness Sambandha asked, 'Sir, if that is so, please take me also along with you,' and started at once with all his entourage. The Brahmin was going in advance and the party was following behind. Suddenly the Brahmin disappeared. As the party was looking here and there, in confusion, a group of hunters surrounded them, and robbed them of the palanquin, umbrella, golden bells and all the pearls and other valuable accompaniments, their provisions and even the clothes they were wearing. They were left with only their loin cloths. They did not know the way; it was very hot and there was no shelter, and all were hungry as it was time for taking food. What could they do? Then Sambandha prayed to God: 'Oh! Lord, why am I being tested like this? I don't care what happens to me, but why should these followers of mine be put to this hard test?' On hearing those prayers, God appeared in his real form and said, 'My son, these hunters too are my *Pramatha Ganās* (personal attendants). They deprived you of all your possessions as it is best to proceed to the worship of Lord Arunachala without any show or pomp. All your belongings will be restored to you as soon as you reach there. It is noon time now. You may enjoy the feast and then proceed further'. So saying he disappeared.

“ At once, a big tent appeared on a level space nearby. Some Brahmins came out of the tent and invited Sambandha and his party to their tent, entertained them to a feast with delicious dishes of various kinds and with *chandanam* (sandal paste) and *thāmbūlam* (betel leaves). Sambandha who was all along entertaining others, was himself entertained by the Lord Himself. After they had rested for a while, one of the Brahmins in the tent got up and said, ‘ Sir, shall we proceed to Arunagiri ? ’ Sambandha was extremely happy and accompanied the Brahmin along with his followers. But as soon as they set out on their journey, the tent together with the people in it disappeared. While Sambandha was feeling astonished at those strange happenings, the guide who had been leading them to Arunachala disappeared as soon as they arrived there. Suddenly, the tent along with the people in it and the hunters who had robbed them previously appeared from all sides and, placing before Sambandha all his belongings which they had robbed previously, they vanished. With tears of joy and with a thrill in his body, Sambandha praised the Lord for His great kindness, stayed there for some days, worshipped Him with flowers of verses in praise of Him and then proceeded on his journey. Out of His affection for Sambandha, who was serving Him with reverence, God Himself, it would appear, invited him to this hill.”

So saying, Bhagavan assumed silence, with his heart filled with devotion and with his voice trembling with emotion.

2nd February 1947

(12) DIVINE FORCE

I went to the hall at 2-30 this afternoon. Bhagavan was there already, reading a paper which someone had handed to him. I sat there, waiting to hear what Bhagavan would say. Bhagavan folded the paper with a smile and said, "All this will occur to us when we think that there is a difference between God and us. If we think that there is no such difference, all this will not occur."

But I felt, "Is it enough if we say, that there is no difference between God and ourselves? Is it not necessary to enquire who oneself is, and what one's origin is, before one thinks that there is no difference between oneself and God? Why is Bhagavan saying this?" I was thinking of asking Bhagavan why he was thus misleading us but could not summon up enough courage to do so. I do not know if Bhagavan sensed this misgiving of mine, but he himself began speaking again as follows :

"Before we realise that there is no difference between us and God, we should first discard all these unreal attributes which are really not ours. We cannot perceive truth unless all these qualities are discarded. There is a Divine force (*Chaitanya Śakti*) which is the source of all things. All these other qualities cannot be discarded unless we get hold of that force. *Sādhana* is required to get hold of that force."

I got courage as I heard those words and said unconsciously, "So there is a force?" "Yes," replied Bhagavan, "There is a force. It is that force that is called *swa-*

sphurana (consciousness of the Self):” I said with a quivering voice, “Bhagavan said casually that it is enough if we think that there is no difference between us and God. But we can discard these unreal attributes only if we are able to get hold of that force. Let it be the Divine force or the consciousness of the Self. Whatever it is, should we not know it? We are not able to know it however much we try.”

Never before this, did I ask Bhagavan questions in the presence of others so boldly. Today, the inner urge was so great that words came out of my mouth of their own accord in the course of conversation, and my eyes were filled with tears and so I turned my face towards the wall. A lady sitting next to me told me afterwards that Bhagavan's eyes also became moist. How tender-hearted he is towards the humble !

Bhagavan sometimes used to say, “The *jnāni* weeps with the weeping, laughs with the laughing, plays with the playful, sings with those who sing, keeping time to the song. What does he lose ? His presence is like a pure, transparent mirror. It reflects our image exactly as we are. It is we that play the several parts in life and reap the fruits of our actions. How is the mirror or the stand on which it is mounted affected ? Nothing affects them, as they are mere supports. The actors in this world — the doers of all acts — must decide for themselves what song and what action is for the welfare of the world, what is in accordance with *sāstrās*, and what is practicable.” That is what Bhagavan used to say. This is a practical illustration.

4th February 1947

(13) SLEEP AND THE REAL STATE

Somebody handed a slip of paper with a question on it to Bhagavan this afternoon. The purport of it was: "What happens to this world during sleep? In what state is the *jnāni* during sleep?" Affecting surprise, Bhagavan replied, "Oh! Is that what you want to know? Do you know what is happening to your body and in what state you are when you are asleep? During your sleep you forget that your body is here, in this place, on this mat, in this very condition, and you wander about somewhere and do something. It is only when you wake up that you realise that you are here. But you are always existent during the sleeping state as well as during the waking state. Your body is lying inert, without any activity during your sleep. Therefore you are not this body during the sleeping condition. Then, to what are you attached during sleep? There must be something which is the prop for these comings and goings. You lie down with a view to sleep. But you get dreams; then you sleep knowing happily nothing. It is a very happy sleep. So you admit that you were there in the sleeping state. And yet you say that you are aware of nothing in that state. What is real, you say you do not know. What is unreal and fleeting, you say you know. But in truth you know what is real. These fleeting things—let them come and go—they will not touch you. You do not know about yourself but you ask what happens to the world? What does the *jnāni* experience in the sleeping state? If you first know what happens to you, the world will know about itself. You ask about *jnānis*, but they that know that real state of things, the Truth, they are the same in

any state or condition. In their daily routine of taking food, moving about and all the rest, they act only for others. Not a single action is done for themselves. I have already told you many times that just as there are people whose profession is to mourn for a fee, so also the *jnānis* do things for the sake of others with detachment, without themselves being affected by them."

Another devotee took up the conversation and asked : "Swami, you say the real state must be known, and that meditation is necessary to realise that. 'But first of all what is meditation?' " "Meditation means Brahman," Bhagavan replied. "To get rid of the evils that are created by the mind, it is said that some *nishta* (religious practice) must be adopted, and meditation based on that must be practised. As you go on doing it, those evils will disappear. And, after they disappear, the meditation itself becomes fixed as Brahman. *Tapas* also means the same thing. When you ask how to get rid of all these *vāsanās*, they say, 'Do *tapas*.' But what is the reward of *tapas*? It is said, '*tapas* itself is the reward.' *Tapas* means *swarūpa* (realisation of the self). What is real is the *swarūpa*, that is *Ātma*, the Supreme Self, that is Brahman.' That is everything. Of course in technical language you have to say, 'Do meditation' but these doubts do not arise if you know who it is that is really meditating." The same idea was conveyed in Bhagavan's 'Upadesa Saram' :

अहमपेतकं निजविभानकम् ।

महदिदं तपो रमणवागियम् ।

"The Realisation of That which subsists when all trace of 'I' is gone is great *tapas*. So sings Ramana."

— *Upadesa Sāram*, 30.

7th February 1947

(14) THE INCARNATION OF
SRI DAKSHINĀMŪRTHY

While translating '*Dakshināmūrthy Sthothram*' into Tamil verse with commentary, Bhagavan summarised the original story about the reason for Dakshinamurthy's incarnation and wrote it in the preface. Besides that he divided nine *slokās* therein into three groups dealing with the world, the seer and the seen respectively. The first three: (1) *Viswam Darpanam*, (2) *Bijasyānthariva*, (3) *Yesyaiva sphuranam*, deal with the origin of the world. The next three: (1) *Nānāchhidra*, (2) *Rāhugrastha*, (3) *Deham Prānam*, deal with the seer; and the last three: (1) *Bālyā-diswapi*, (2) *Viswam Pasyathi*, (3) *Bhūrambhāmsi*, deal with the light by which things are seen. The last *sloka*, *Sarvāthmatvam*, means that the whole universe is merged in Brahman.

Recently I translated the preface into Telugu. Bhagavan went through the translation, and said with a smile, "I mentioned briefly in the preface, only as much of the life story as related to the *sthothra*, but the real story is much more interesting. It is like this: Brahma asked Sanaka, Sanatkumara, Sanandana and Sanatsujata, who are the creations of his mind, to assist him in the task of creation, but they were not interested in that task and so declined to assist. They were surrounded by the heavenly Gods, saints and other attendants, and were staying in Nandana Vana and so they were considering who would impart to them *jñāna*, the supreme Wisdom. Narada appeared, and said, 'Who can impart the *Brahma Jñāna*, the Supreme Wisdom,

except Brahma himself? Come on, we shall go to him.' They all agreed and proceeded to *Satya Loka*, the abode of Brahma, and found Saraswathi playing the veena, with Brahma seated in front of her, nearby, enjoying the music and beating time to the tune. They all beheld the scene and wondered how a person who is engrossed in the appreciation of his wife's music could teach them *adhyātma tattva* (the essence of spirituality). Narada said to them, 'Come! let us go to *Vaikunta*, the abode of Vishnu'. They all proceeded thither. The Lord was in the interior of his residence. Narada is however a privileged person and so he rushed into the Lord's abode, saying he would see and come back. Soon he came out and, when asked, told them, 'There Brahma was seated a little away from his wife who was playing the veena for him. But here, the Goddess Lakshmi is seated on the God's bed and is massaging his feet. This is much worse. How can this family man who is bound by the intimate glance of his consort render us any help (in learning *adhyātma vidya*)? Look at the splendour of this palace and this city! This is enough. Let us seek the help of Lord Siva.'

"They all proceeded towards Himachala and seeing Mount Kailas, they ascended it with great hopes. But there, in the midst of a vast gathering of his fellows was Siva performing his celestial dance with his wife sharing half of his body. Vishnu was playing on the Drum, and Brahma was keeping time with the bells as an accompaniment for the dance. They who came eagerly seeking spiritual guidance, were aghast at the sight, and thought, 'Oh! He too is after women! Brahma was no doubt with his wife but was not in physical contact with her, while Vishnu, was in mere physical contact with his wife, but Siva is actually keeping

Parvathi as part of Himself. This is much worse! Enough of this.' And they all departed. Siva understood and was sorry for them. He said, 'What delusion on their part! They regard the three Godheads as devoid of spiritual wisdom merely because they were being served by their respective wives when the devotees saw them! Who else can impart spiritual knowledge to these earnest seekers of Truth?' Thus thinking, Siva sent away Parvathi on the plea of himself doing *tapas* and the kind hearted Lord seated Himself in the guise of a youth with *Chinmudra*, as Dakshinamurthy, under a Banyan tree on the Northern side of lake Manasarovar, just on the way by which these disappointed devotees were returning to their respective homes. I read this story somewhere," said Bhagavan.

"How interesting is the story! Why did not Bhagavan include it in the introduction?" I said.

"I cannot say! I thought it unnecessary for me to record all these incidents of Dakshināmūrthy's life in the Introduction. I included only as much as was required for the *Ashtakās* (8 *slokas*)," replied Bhagavan.

On further enquiry, it was found that this story was narrated in *Siva Rahasya*, tenth canto, second chapter under the heading, "The Incarnation of Sri Dakshinamurthy." A devotee who heard this asked, "Does incarnation mean Birth of Sri Dakshinamurthy?" "Where is the question of a Birth for him? It is one of the five *Murthys* (forms) of Siva. It means that he is seated facing south in *mouna mudra* (silent posture). It is the want of Form, Formlessness, that is indicated in its inner meaning. Is it the Murthy, the Form, that is described in the *Dakshinamurthy Ashtaka*? Is it not the want of Form, Formlessness? 'Sri Dakshina-

murthy' — 'Sri' means *Maya Sakti* (illusory force) ; one meaning of 'Dakshinā' is efficient, another meaning is 'in the heart on the right side of the body' ; 'Amūrthy' means 'Formlessness'. A lot of commentary on this, is possible, isn't it ?" said Bhagavan.

The same devotee asked, "Sanaka, and the others are described in the *Bhāgavata Purāna* as young boys of five years of age for all time ; but this *sthothra* says '*vriddhā śishyā Gurur yuvā* (old disciples and young Guru) ; how is that ?"

"*Jnānis* (the wise), always remain young. There is no youth, and no old age for them. The description '*vriddhā*' and '*śishyā*', 'old' and 'disciple' means that Sanaka and the others were old in actual age. All such are old in years and everlastingly young in appearance," said Bhagavan.

I give below my translation of the introduction written by Bhagavan :

"Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanathkumāra and Sanatsujāta who are the four sons born from the mind of Brahma, learnt that they were brought into existence to further the creation etc. of the world, but they were not interested in the task, and sought only Truth and Knowledge and wandered in search of a Guru. Lord Siva sympathised with those earnest seekers of Truth and Himself sat under a bānyan tree in the silent state as Dakshinamurthy with *chinmudra*. Sanaka and the others observed Him, and were at once attracted by Him like iron by a magnet, and attained self-realisation in His presence in no time. To those who are not able to know the real significance of the silent and original form (of Dakshinamurthy) Sankara summarised the universal truth

in this *sthothra* and explained to *Uthamādhikāris* (highly developed souls) that the *Sakti* (force) which dissolves the three obstacles for realisation of the Truth, that is the world, the seer and the seen, is not different from one's own self and that everything gets ultimately merged in one's own self."

15th February 1947

(15) "THE *JNĀNI*'S MIND IS
BRAHMAN ITSELF

I went to the Hall at about 7-30 this morning. It was all silent inside. The aroma of the burning incense sticks coming out of the windows indicated to the new visitors that Bhagavan was there. I went inside, bowed before Bhagavan and then sat down. Bhagavan, who was all along leaning on a pillow, sat up erect in the *Padmāsana* pose. In a moment his look became motionless and transcendent and the whole hall was filled with lustre. Suddenly someone asked, "Swamiji! Do the *Jnānis* have a mind or not?"

Bhagavan cast a benevolent look at him, and said, "There is no question of one realising Brahman without a mind; realisation is possible only if there is a mind; mind always functions with some *upādhi* (support); there is no mind without *upādhi*; it is only in connection with the *upādhi* that we say that one is a *jñāni*. Without the *upādhi*, how can one say that some one is a *jñāni*? But how does the *upādhi* function without mind? It does not; that is why it is said that the *jñāni*'s mind itself is Brahman. The *jñāni* is always looking at Brahman. How is it possible to see without a mind? That is why it is said that the *jñāni*'s mind

is *Brahmākāra* and *akhandākāra*. But in reality his mind itself is Brahman. Just as an ignorant man does not recognise Brahman within but only recognises the external *vruttis* (things), so also though the *jñāni's* body moves about in the external *vruttis*, he always recognises only the Brahman within. That Brahman is all-pervading ; when once the mind is lost in the Brahman, to call the mind *Brahmākāra* is like saying that a river is like the ocean ; when once all the rivers get lost in the ocean, it is all one vast sheet of water ; can you then distinguish in that vast sheet of water, ' This is the Ganges, this is the Goutami, this river is so long, that river is so wide ', and so on ? It is the same with regard to the mind also. "

Someone else asked, " They say that *satvam* is Brahman, and that *rajas* and *tamas* are *ābhāsa* ; is that so ? " Bhagavan replied : " Yes ! *Sat* is what exists ; *Sat* is *satvam* ; it is the natural thing ; it is the subtle movement of the mind. By its contacts with *rajas* and *tamas gunās* it creates the world with its innumerable forms. It is only due to its contact with *rajas* and *tamas* that the mind looks at the world which is *ābhāsa*, and gets deluded. If you remove that contact, *satva* shines pure and uncontaminated. That is called pure *Satva* or *Suddhasatva* ; this contact cannot be eliminated unless you contemplate with the subtle mind, and then discard the contact. All the *vāsanās* have to be subdued and the mind has to become very subtle ; that means, ' subtle among the subtle ; they say *anoraneeyam* (atom within an atom) ; it should become atomic to the atomic. If it becomes subdued as an atom to the atom, then it rises to the infinite among infinities, ' *mahato maheeyam* ', of its own accord, they say ; call it the mind seeing, or the mind acquiring powers ; call it whatever you like ; by whatever name it is called, we

sleep ; the mind, with all its activities lies subdued in the heart ; what do we see then ? Nothing. Why ? Because the mind lies subdued ; we wake up ; as soon as we wake up there is mind, there is *Sat* and Brahman ; as soon as the mind that is awake is attached to the *gunās*, every activity emerges ; if you discard those *guna vikārās*, (vagaries of the mind), the Brahman appears everywhere, self-luminous and self-evident, the *Aham*, 'I'. Then everything appears *thanmayam* (all-pervading). See the technical language of the Vedānta ; they say, *Brahma-vid*, (Brahman-knowing), *Brahma Vidvarishta*, (supreme among the Brahman-knowing), and so on, and then they say, *Brahmaiva Bhavati*, (he becomes Brahman itself). He is Brahman itself. That is why we say that the *jñāni*'s mind itself is Brahman."

Someone else asked, "They say that the *jñāni* conducts himself with absolute equality towards all ?" Bhagavan replied, "Yes ! What is conducting himself ?"

मैत्रीकरुणामुदितोपेक्षाणां
सुखदुःख पुण्यापुण्यविषयाणां
भावनातश्चित्तप्रसादनम् ।

— *Patanjala Yoga Sutra*, 1 : 37.

Maitri (friendship), *karunā* (kindness), *muditha* (happiness) and *upekshā* (indifference) and such other *bhāvas* become natural to them. Affection towards the good, kindness towards the helpless, happiness in doing good deeds, forgiveness towards the wicked, all such things are natural characteristics of the *jñāni*.

9th February 1947

(16) *MĀYĀ* (ILLUSION)

The same devotee who questioned Bhagavan yesterday again asked him this afternoon about illusion, *Māyā*. "Swami, all the innumerable varieties of things that appear to the human mind to be real, are mere *māyā* (illusion), aren't they? Will the illusion disappear if they are all discarded?"

Bhagavan replied, "Illusion will continue to appear as illusion, so long as the idea that oneself and Iswara are two different entities persists. When once that illusion is discarded and the individual realises that he is Iswara, he will understand that *māyā* is not something distinct and separate from his own self. Iswara exists without and distinct from illusion, but there is no illusion without Iswara." "Therefore that illusion changes into pure illusion, doesn't it?" asked the questioner. Bhagavan replied, "Yes! It amounts to that; unless the individual self is existent how can one realise Iswara? There is no self, unless the illusion is there. When once the individual realises who he is, the evil effects, '*doshās*' of illusion do not affect him; call it pure illusion, or anything else you like; that is the essential thing."

Somebody else took up the topic and asked, "They say that the *jīva* is subject to the evil effects of illusion such as limited vision and knowledge, whereas Iswara has all-pervading vision and knowledge and such other characteristics and that *jīva* and Iswara become one and identical if the individual discards his limited vision and knowledge, and such other characteristics usually attached to him; but

should not Iswara also discard his particular characteristics such as all-pervading vision and knowledge? They too are illusions, aren't they?"

"Is that your doubt? First discard your limited vision and such like characteristics and then it will be time enough to think of Iswara's all-pervading vision, knowledge etc. First get rid of your limited knowledge; why do you worry about Iswara? He will look after Himself. Has He not got as much capacity as we have? Why should we worry whether He possesses the all-pervading vision and knowledge or not? It is indeed a great thing if we can take care of ourselves."

The questioner asked again, "But first of all we must find a Guru who can give us sufficient practice and thereby enable us to get rid of these *gunās*, mustn't we?"

"If we have the earnestness to get rid of these qualities can we not find a Guru? We must first have the desire to get rid of them. When once we have this the Guru will himself come, searching for us; or, he will somehow manage to draw us to himself. The Guru will always be on the alert and keep an eye on us; Iswara himself will show us the Guru. Who else will look after the welfare of the children except the father himself? He is always with us, surrounding us. He protects us, as a bird protects its eggs by hatching them under the shelter of its wings." But we must have whole-hearted faith in Him," said Bhagavan.

A devotee, by name Sankaramma, who is generally afraid of asking Bhagavan questions, said quietly on hearing those words: "But Swamiji! Guru's *upadesa* (instruction) is necessary for *sādhana*, isn't it?" Bhagavan

replied, "Oh! Is that so? But that *upadesa* is being given every day; those who are in need of it, may have it." Others present there said: "But Bhagavan must bless us that we may be enabled to receive the instruction. That is our prayer." "The blessing is always there," replied Bhagavan.

10th February 1947

(17) *AADARANĀ* (REGARD)

At noon today three French ladies arrived here by car from Pondicherry; one was the Governor's wife, another the Secretary's wife and the third was someone connected with them. They rested for a while after food and reached the hall by about 2-30 p.m. Two of them could not sit on the floor and so they sat on the window sill opposite to Bhagavan; the third somehow managed to sit on the floor. They took leave of Bhagavan at about 3 p.m. and left. When I saw them I remembered some other incidents connected with the visit of an American lady to the Asramam, how she sat with legs stretched out, and was advised by the inmates of the Asramam not to do so, how Bhagavan admonished them by narrating the stories of Avvayar and Namdev. I wrote to you about all that long back. I shall now write to you two more incidents of a similar type.

About ten months ago, an old European lady came here along with another European called Frydman and stayed here for about twenty days. She was not accustomed to squatting on the ground because of her Western style of living. Besides, she was old. So she used to suffer considerably,

being unable to sit down, and if she sat down finding it difficult to get up. The gentleman used to help her to get up, by holding her hand. One day when I reached the hall by about 8 a.m. I found them both seated in the front row in the space allotted for ladies. The other ladies were hesitating to sit nearby, and so I signed to him to move a bit further away, which he did immediately. Bhagavan got annoyed and looked at me but I did not at the time know why. I was standing near the sofa talking to somebody. Frydman suddenly got up and also helped her to get up; her eyes were filled with tears and most reluctantly she took leave of Bhagavan. Bhagavan as usual nodded his head in token of permission. As soon as they left, Bhagavan looked at me and said, "It is a pity they are going away." I felt that I had committed a great crime and said, "I am sorry. I did not know they were leaving." Bhagavan felt that I had realised my mistake and that I was repenting for it and so said, "No. It is not that. They suffer a lot if they sit on the ground. That is why so many who are anxious to come here stay away. They are not accustomed to squat. What can they do? It is a great pity."

Some time ago, a very poor old lady came here one morning with her relatives. All except she made their *pranāms* to Bhagavan and sat down. She however remained standing. Krishnaswamy, the attendant, requested her to sit down but she did not do so. Her relatives called her to come away but she did not do that either. I too advised her to go to them and sit down but she did not take any notice. Someone there said, admonishing her, "Why don't you listen to the advice of all the people here?" I looked at her relatives to find out the reason of her obstinacy. They said that she was almost blind and so wanted to go

near Swami to see him at close quarters. I got up, took her hand and led her to the sofa where Bhagavan was seated. Shading her eyes with the palm of her hand she looked at Bhagavan intently and said, "Swami! I can't see properly. Please bless me that I may be enabled to see you in my mind." With looks full of tenderness, Bhagavan nodded his head by way of assent saying, "All right."

As soon as they left, Bhagavan told us, "The poor lady can't see properly and so is afraid of coming near to see me. What can she do? She merely stood there. To those who have no eyes, the mind is the eye. They have only one sight, that of the mind, and not many other sights to distract their attention. Only the mind should get concentration; when once that is obtained they are much better than us.' What a mild and soothing admonition!

12th February 1947

(18) *SĀDHANA* IN THE PRESENCE OF THE GURU

Today, I reached the hall at about 3 p.m. Bhagavan was at leisure, answering questions asked by some devotee. One of them was: "Swami, they say that *japa* and *tapa* performed in the presence of Bhagavan yield greater results than usual. If so, what about bad actions done in your presence?" Bhagavan replied, "If, good actions yield good results, bad actions must yield bad results. If the gift of a cow in Benares yields great *punya* (virtue) to the donor, the slaughter of a cow there results in great

pāpa (sin). When you say that a little virtuous action done in a holy place yields enormous benefit, a sinful action must likewise yield enormous harm. So long as the feeling that you are the doer is there, you must face the consequences of your actions, good or bad."

"There is the desire to discard bad habits but the force of the *vāsanās* is very strong; what are we to do?" that person continued. "There must be human effort to discard them. Good company, good contacts, good deeds and all such good practices must be acquired, in order to eliminate the *vāsanās*. As you keep on trying, eventually with the ripening of the mind and with God's grace, the *vāsanās* get extinguished and efforts succeed. That is called *Purushakāram* (human effort). How could God be expected to be favourable towards you without your striving for it?" said Bhagavan.

Another person took up the thread of conversation and said, "It is said that the whole universe is God's *chid-vilāsam* and that everything is *Brahmamayam*. Then why should we say that bad habits and bad practices should be discarded?" Bhagavan replied, "Why? I will tell you. There is the human body. Suppose there is some wound inside it. If you neglect it, on the assumption that it is only a small part of the body, it causes pain to the whole body. If it is not cured by ordinary treatment, the doctor must come, cut off the affected portion with a knife and remove the impure blood. The good blood must be protected with proper bandaging etc., mustn't it? If the diseased part is not cut off it will fester. If you do not bandage it after operation, puss will form. It is the same thing with regard to conduct. Bad habits and bad conduct are

like a wound in the body ; if a man does, not discard them, he will fall into the abyss below. Hence every disease must be given appropriate treatment."

"Bhagavan says that *sādhana* must be done to discard all such bad things ; but the mind itself is inert and cannot do anything by itself ; *chaitanya* is *ačhalam* (motionless) and so will not do anything. Then how is one to perform *sādhana* ?" someone asked. Bhagavan replied, "Oho ! But how are you able to talk now ?" "Swami, I do not understand that and that is why I ask for enlightenment," he said. Bhagavan replied, "All right. Then please listen. The mind which is inert is able to achieve everything by the force of its contact, *saannidhyabala* (strength of proximity) with *Chaitanya* (Self) which is *achala*. But without the aid of *chaitanya* the inert mind cannot accomplish anything by itself ; *Chaitanya*, being immobile, cannot accomplish anything without the help of the mind. It is the relationship of *avinābhāvam*, one dependent on the other and inseparable. That is why elders discussed this matter from various angles and came to the conclusion that the mind is *chit-jada-ātmakam*. We have to say that the combination of *Chit* (Self) and *jada* (inert) produces action."

Bhagavan has written nicely about this *Chit-jada-granthi* in his ' *Unnathi Nalubadhi* ' verse 24, as follows :

"The body does not say 'I'. The Atman is not born. In between, the feeling 'I' is born in the whole body. Whatever name you give it, that is *Chit-jada-granthi* (the knot between the consciousness and the inert), and also bondage,

13th February 1947

(19) *HRIDAYAM — SAHASRĀRAM*

Seeing that extempore verses of Bhagavan in Tamil are found here and there in some books, we have been thinking for a long time past that they should all be collected together in one book but somehow we have delayed the matter. Four or five days back, I told Niranjananandaswamy about this, brought a note-book and began copying them enthusiastically, though my knowledge of Tamil is very limited.

When I asked Bhagavan in what books they are to be found, he said, "They must be in those big note-books bearing numbers one, two and three. Please see," and again, "Whenever anyone asked me, I used to write them out on small bits of paper and give them to them. They used to take them away. Some of them were noted down in these books and some were not. If all of them were here, there would by now have been quite a lot. I wrote many more while I was on the hill. Some of them were thrown away. Who had the desire or the patience to preserve them? If you want them, see what is there." I felt pained that the Divine voice had not been preserved for future generations and had thus been lost. I took up volume one, and found at the top ten verses under the heading, "Bhagavan's Compositions." I asked him what those verses were and he replied :

"When I was in Virupaksha cave, Nayana came there once with a boy named Arunachala. He had studied up to the school final class. While Nayana

and I were talking, the boy sat in a bush nearby. He somehow listened to our conversation and composed nine verses in English, giving the gist of what we were talking about. The verses were good and so I translated them into Tamil verses in *Ahaval* metre. They read like Telugu *Dwipada* metre. The substance of the verses is as follows :

“ ‘From the sun of Bhagavan’s face, the rays of his words start out and bestow glow and strength on the moon of Ganapathy Sastry’s (Nayana’s) face which in turn lights the faces of people on the earth like us.’

“ One more thing. Ganapathy Sastry used to say that *Sahasrāra* is the source and the centre of all. The Heart is the support of *Sahasrāra*, is it not? The Heart bestows light on the *Sahasrāra*. I used to say that the Heart is the source of all and that the force that emerges out of the Heart shines in the *Sahasrāra*. To include this idea, the verse suggests a double meaning that the Heart is the sun, the solar orb, and the *Sahasrāra* is the moon.”

15th February 1947

(20) TELUGU VENBA

The magazine “Thyagi” published last month a review on the recently printed Tamil *purānam* called “*Ṭiruchuli*”. In the review they included three verses taken out from the book called, ‘*Ṭiruchuli Venba Andadhi*’ by way of comparison. Encouraged by the *Sarvādhikāri*, I wanted to read the review, and therefore took the magazine from Bhagavan about ten days ago.

The *venba* is poetry with double meanings. Since it is in praise of Bhuminātha (i.e. Siva) it is pleasant to hear it sung. I was seated in the hall, staring at the magazine. Bhagavan felt that I would not be able to understand it, and so gave me the gist of the three verses, as follows : “Bhuminātha is the name of the God in Thiruchuli temple, and Sahāya Vālli the name of the Goddess ; this local *purāna* is included in *Skanda Purāna* under the name of ‘*Tirisulapura Mahātmyam*.’

“ ‘O Bhuminātha ! All the Gods in heaven praised you as a hero unaided, on the assumption that you achieved victory by your own powers, unaided by any one in the fight against Tripurāsūrās. But you are Ardhanareeswara, half-man and half-woman ; so, what would you have achieved in the fight against Tripurāsūrās, if you had not been aided by the Goddess Sahāya Valli ? The left of your body is hers ; could you have stretched your bow without her aid ? ’ That is the meaning.”

“ ‘You are immobile in forms ; without the aid of the Goddess Sakti (energy), what could you achieve ? Therefore it is not true to say that you are a hero, unaided. You cannot achieve anything without the aid of our ‘Sahāya Valli.’ That is the other meaning. There are many other varieties of special meanings included in those writings,” said Bhagavan, in an ecstasy of devotion.

It appears the book ‘*Venba Andadhi*’ was received from the editors of the magazine next day. When I went there in the afternoon at 2-30, Bhagavan told me that the book had been received. As I took it up to see, Bhagavan told me laughingly, “Nayana started to compose *venba* in Sanskrit but the *prāsa* (metre) did not agree, and he left off

as he found the metre to be more difficult than *Arya Vritta*." He himself said that it is *Sukla Chandas*. Lakshmana Sarma at first composed his verses '*Unnathi Nalubadhi*' in Sanskrit, in *venba* metre but the *prāsa* and *ganās* were not right. I corrected only the *mangala sloka*. Narasinga Rao composed it in Telugu but that too did not come out well." "That is perhaps because there is no suitable metre in Telugu?" I suggested. "Yes! It is so! It is rather difficult. I could have composed it, but somehow I did not do so." I asked Bhagavan, rather regretfully, "has Bhagavan stopped altogether composing in Telugu?" He replied, "you yourself can do so, if I tell you the *ganās*. Why should I?" "But I do not know even the ordinary *chandas*. How can I know these specialised variety? Even Nayana could not compose, you said. If so who else can do it? Bhagavan himself must write. Bhagavan's compositions which are in the form of *sutrās* are very pleasant, aren't they? You must please favour us (with your compositions)," I requested him earnestly. He did not utter a word, but remained silent. I felt dejected and went home with the book.

I could not attend the hall for three days. When I reached there on the fourth day, Bhagavan gave me bits of paper and said, "The other day we were talking about '*venba*' in Telugu. The next day I composed these three verses in Telugu and then translated them into Tamil. See! They should be sung in *Sankarābharana rāga* slowly, very slowly."

"You should give us some more verses on the same lines!" I requested him. He replied, "Enough! There is no suitable *chandas* in Telugu. People would laugh at it!"

There is not even a suitable topic to write about! They are all ordinary words.” “Bhagavan’s voice does not require any topic in particular. Whatever comes out of his mouth is a topic, and that is the veda. If there is no suitable metre in Telugu, why does Bhagavan not create one?” I said.

Muruganar supported me, and said, “If Bhagavan composes now and then like this, it will become a volume in due course. If the Telugu language can gain a new metre, is it not a great gain for it?” Bhagavan did not reply. I copied out for myself the three *venbas*.

20th February 1947

(21) *EKĀTMA PANCHAKAM*

In my last letter I wrote to you about Telugu *venba*. I felt that it would have been better if Bhagavan had composed some more verses, but kept quiet for the time being, as I felt I should not ask unless a suitable opportunity occurred. When I reached the hall in the afternoon of the 16th, Bhagavan was talking to a devotee about *venba* metre. He saw me and began to explain the differences between Tamil and Telugu *chandas* and said, “It seems Guha Namasivaya Swamy one day decided to compose at the rate of one *venba* per day. That would be about 360 verses in a year. He composed a number of verses, acting on this principle. What remained after some had been lost were printed by his devotees. Quite a number of them are available now.” “Will it not be beneficial to the world if Bhagavan also composes similarly?” said the devotees.

"I do not know why, but my mind refuses to move in that direction. What am I to do?" replied Bhagavan. "But they are so few! If some more are composed, and if the relative *chandas* is constructed, it will be a new treasure for our language!" I said.

"That is all very well, but am I a Pandit? If all this is to be written, one has to study *Bhāgavatam*, *Bhāratam* and all that. But what am I to write about? What is there to write about?" he asked.

"Whatever Bhagavan writes will itself be a matter of interest" I replied.

He replied, "You write so many verses. Is that not enough? If you want, get me *Pedda Bāla Siksha* (popular children's primer in Telugu), or *Sulakshana Sāram*. I shall tell you the *ganās*, and you may compose yourself." I said, "I don't want to write anything. If Bhagavan writes anything, I shall read it; otherwise not." He laughed and kept silent.

Feeling it to be of no use, I went out and began writing something sitting in the front of the verandah. But you see Bhagavan is full of kindness. As soon as I left the hall, it seems he composed a *venba* and read it out to the devotees. He saw me. In the evening, as he was going out, he looked at me and said, "Here is another, *venba* I have just now composed. You may see it." Overwhelmed with joy, I looked at it and kept it. Bhagavan translated it into Tamil and told Muruganar, "Am I well-read in Telugu? That is why I try to avoid writing in Telugu, but she keeps on asking. I raised several objections but she did not agree. Therefore I had to write."

"Bhagavan's voice is destined to come out in this manner," said Muruganar. It was 6 p.m., I came home saying I would copy it the next day. I went to the Hall next morning at 8 o'clock. On seeing me, Bhagavan said, "Here is another, composed by me last night. They make five in all. They may be called '*Ātma Panchakam*'! But Sankara has already composed something under the same name. Let us therefore call them '*Ekātma Panchakam*.' I have already numbered the verses. You may verify, and copy them out."

As instructed, I copied them out. On seeing me do that, several other devotees also copied them and got them by heart. This afternoon a lady devotee sang the *Ekātma Panchakam* in the Hall. When she sang the third verse, commencing '*thanalo thanuvunda*' Bhagavan looked at me and said, "See! I gave this example of the cinema when I was in Virupaksha cave, even before cinemas became popular. There were no cinemas in Sankara's time. Therefore he gave the example '*viswam darpana drusya-māna nagari*'. He would not have given that example if there had been cinemas in his time. We have now got in the cinema a very easy example to give."

24th February 1947

(22) BIRTH

Yesterday a lady devotee showed Bhagavan her note-book in which she had copied out the five verses of '*Ekātma Panchakam*'. Bhagavan saw in that note-book two verses composed by him for his devotees when they first started celebrating his birthday, and told us the following incident:

"On one of my birthdays while I was in Virupaksha cave, probably in 1912, those around me insisted on cooking food and eating it there as a celebration of the occasion. I tried to dissuade them, but they took no notice. They rebelled saying, 'What harm does it do to Swamiji, if we cook our food and eat it here?' I therefore left it at that. Immediately after that they purchased some vessels. Those vessels are still here. What began as a small function has resulted in all this paraphernalia and pomp. Everything must take its own course, and will not stop at our request. I told them at great length, but they did not listen. When the cooking and eating were over, Iswaraswamy who used to be with me in those days, said, 'Swamiji! This is your birthday. Please compose two verses and I too will compose two.' It was then that I composed these two verses which I find in the note-book here. They run as follows :

1. You who intend to celebrate the birthday, first ascertain as to whence you were born. The day that we attain a place in that everlasting life which is beyond the reach of births and deaths is our real birthday.

2. Even on these birthdays, that occur once a year, we ought to lament that we have got this body and fallen into this world. Instead we celebrate the event with a feast. To rejoice over it is like decorating a corpse. Wisdom consists in realising the Self and in getting absorbed therein.

"This is the purport of those verses. It appears that it is a custom amongst a certain section of people, in Malabar to weep when a child is born in the house and celebrate a death with drums, pipes etc. Really one should lament having left one's real state, and taken birth again in this world, and not celebrate it as a festive occasion." I asked,

"But what did Iswaraswamy write?" "Oh! He! He wrote, praising me as an *Avatār* (incarnation of God) and all that. That was a pastime with him in those days. He used to compose one verse and in return I used to compose one, and so on, we wrote many verses, but nobody took the trouble to preserve them. Most of the time we two were alone in those days, there were no facilities for food etc. Who would stay? Nowadays all facilities are provided, and so, many people are gathering around me and sitting here. But what was there in those days? If any visitors came, they used to stay for a little while, and then go away. That was all."

On my request to give me a Telugu translation of those birthday verses, he wrote one and gave it to me.

25th February 1947

(23) SELF (*ĀTMAN*)

This morning a Gujarati lady arrived from Bombay, with her husband and children. She was middle-aged, and from her face she appeared to be a cultured lady. The husband wore khaddar, and therefore appeared to be a congressman. They seemed respectable people, the way they conducted themselves. They all gathered in the Hall by about 10 a.m., after finishing their bath etc. From their attitude it could be seen that they intended to ask some questions. Within fifteen minutes or so they began asking as follows :

Lady : Bhagavan ! How can one attain the Self ?

Bhagavan : Why should you attain the Self ?

Lady : For *shānti* (peace).

Bhagavan : So ! Is that it ? Then there is what is called peace, is there ?

Lady : Yes ! there is.

Bhagavan : All right ! And you know that you should attain it. How do you know ? To know that, you must have experienced it at some time or other. It is only when one knows that sugarcane is sweet, that one wishes to have some. Similarly, you must have experienced peace. You experience it now and then. Otherwise, why this longing for peace ? In fact we find every human being is longing similarly for peace, peace of some kind. It is therefore obvious that peace is the real thing, the reality ; call that ' *shanti* ', ' soul ', or ' *Paramatma* ' or ' Self '—whatever you like. We all want it, don't we ?

Lady : Yes ! But how to attain it ?

Bhagavan : What is to be said if some one asks for something which he has already got ? If it is anything to be brought from somewhere, effort is required. But what has been brought on is the mind and its activities. What you have to do is to get rid of that.

Lady : Is living in seclusion necessary for *sādhana* ? or is it enough if we merely discard all worldly pleasures ?

Bhagavan merely answered the second part of the question by saying, ' renunciation means internal renunciation and not external,' and kept silent.

The dinner gong sounded from the dining hall.

What can Bhagavan reply to the earlier part of the last question of this lady who has a large family ? She is also educated, and cultured. Bhagavan used to speak simi-

larly to householders ; and there is a ring of appropriateness about it. After all, is internal or mental renunciation so easy as all that? That is why Bhagavan merely replied that renunciation means internal renunciation and not external. Perhaps the next question would have been, "what is meant by 'internal renunciation'?" and there would have been a reply if the dinner gong had not intervened and the gathering dispersed. I returned to my abode where I live a lonely life. You see God has allotted to each individual what is apt and appropriate.

Did Bhagavan ever ask me, "Why are you living alone?" Or did he mention it to anybody else? Never. If you ask why?, it is because this is appropriate to the conditions of my life.

26th February 1947

(24) GURU SWARŪPAM
(THE GURU'S FORM)

This afternoon a Tamil youth approached Bhagavan, and asked, "Swamiji! Yesterday morning you told the Gujarati lady that renunciation means internal renunciation. How are we to attain it? What is internal renunciation?"

Bhagavan : Internal renunciation means that all the *vāsanās* should be subdued. If you ask me, 'How to attain that?' my reply is, 'it is attainable by *sādhana*.'

Question : *Sādhana* requires a Guru, doesn't it?

Bhagavan : Yes ! A Guru is required.

Question : How is one to decide upon a proper Guru ? What is the *swarūpa* of a Guru ?

Bhagavan : He is the proper Guru to whom your mind is attuned. If you ask, how to decide who is the Guru and what is his *swarūpa*, he should be endowed with tranquillity, patience, forgiveness and other virtues capable of attracting others even with the bare eye like the magnetic stone, and with a feeling of equality towards all — he that has these virtues is the true Guru. If one wants to know the true Guru *swarūpa*, one must know his own *swarūpa* first. How can one know the true Guru *swarūpa*, if one does not know one's own *swarūpa* first? If you want to perceive the true Guru *swarūpa*, you must first learn to look upon the whole universe as *Guru rūpam*. One must have the *Guru bhāvam* towards all living beings. It is the same with God. You must look upon all objects as God's *rūpa*. How can he who does not know his own Self perceive *Iswara rūpa* or *Guru rūpa*? How can he determine them? Therefore, first of all know your own real *swarūpam*.

Question : Isn't a Guru necessary to know even that ?

Bhagavan : That is true. The world contains many great men. Look upon him as your Guru with whom your mind gets attuned. The one in whom you have faith is your Guru.

The youth was not satisfied. He started with a list of great men now living, and said, "He has that defect ; he has this defect. How can they be looked upon as Gurus ?"

Bhagavan tolerates any amount of decrying of himself, but cannot tolerate even a little fault-finding of others. He

said with same impatience, "Oho ! you have been asked to know your own self, but instead you have started finding fault with others. It is enough if you correct your own faults. Those people can take care of their faults. It looks as if they cannot attain salvation unless they obtain your certificate first. That is a great pity ! They are all waiting for your certificates. You are a great man. Have they any salvation, unless you approve of them ? Here you blame them, elsewhere you will blame us. You know everything, whereas we know nothing, and we have to be submissive towards you. Yes ! we shall do so. You go and please proclaim, 'I went to Ramanasramam ; I asked him some questions ; he was unable to reply properly ; he does not know anything.'"

The youth was about to speak again in the same strain, but another devotee prevented him from doing so. Bhagavan observed it, and said, "Why do you stop him ? Let all keep silent, and let him go on speaking as long as he pleases. He is a wise man. We must therefore lie low. I have been observing him ever since his arrival. He was originally sitting in a corner with all his questions carefully assorted and kept ready bundled up, as it were. He has since been moving and coming nearer day by day till at last he has come close enough and has started asking questions, from his bundle so to say, after hearing the lady questioning me yesterday. He must show off his knowledge and so has opened the bundle. All that is in it must come out, mustn't it ? He is going to search the whole world, and decide the *Guru swarūpa* for himself. It seems he has not so far found anybody with the requisite qualifications for being his Guru. Dattatreya is the universal Guru, isn't he ? and he has said that the whole

world was his Guru. If you look at 'evil you feel you should not do it. So he said evil also was his Guru. If you see good, you would wish to do it; so he said that good also was his Guru; both good and evil, he said, were his Gurus. It seems that he asked a hunter which way he should go, but the latter ignored his question, as he was intent upon his aim to shoot a bird above. Dattatreya saluted him, saying, 'You are my Guru! Though killing the bird is bad, keeping your aim so steadfast in shooting the arrow as to ignore my query is good, thereby teaching me that I should keep my mind steadfast and fixed on Iswara. You are therefore my Guru.' In the same way he looked upon everything as his Guru, till in the end he said that his physical body itself was a Guru, as its consciousness does not exist during sleep and the body that does not exist should therefore not be confused with the soul — *dehātmabhāvana* (the feeling that the body is the soul). Therefore that too was a Guru for him. While he looked upon the whole world as his Guru, the whole world worshipped him as its Guru. It is the same with Iswara. He who looks upon the whole universe as Iswara, himself is worshipped by the universe as Iswara — *yadbhāvam tadbhavathi* ('as you conceive you become') What we are, so is the world. There is a big garden. When a cuckoo comes to the garden it will search the mango tree for fruit while the crow will only search the neem tree. The bee searches for flowers to gather honey, while the flies search for the faeces. He who searches for the *sālagrāma* (small holy stone) will pick it up, pushing aside all the other stones. That *sālagrāma* is in the midst of a heap of ordinary stones. The good is recognised because evil also co-exists. Light shines because darkness exists. Iswara is there, only if illusion exists. He who seeks the essence,

is satisfied if he finds one good thing among a hundred. He rejects the ninety-nine and accepts the one that is good, feeling satisfied that with that one thing he could conquer the world. His eye will always be on that single good item." Bhagavan said all this in a resounding voice and then remained silent.

The whole hall was steeped in a dignified silence. The clock struck four. As though it were the original peacock that had come to salute the lotus feet of the Arunachala Ramana that destroyed the demon Surapadma, and to offer praises to him, the Asramam peacock entered the hall from the northern side and announced its arrival by giving out a resounding cry. Bhagavan responded to the cry by saying : "*Aav, Aav*" (come, come) and turned his look that side.

12th March 1947

(25) NO WASTE

Recently Bhagavan wrote the birthday verses and '*Ekātma Panchakam*', didn't he? He was writing them on bits of rough paper that absorbed ink and as I felt pained that the divine letters that looked like a string of pearls should have been written on bits of rough paper, I said to him, "It would be better if they are written in a notebook." "This is all right," he replied, "if I write them in a notebook somebody will recognise my writing and take it away. There is no such fear now. The Swami is the

common property of all." And he declined to accept my suggestion.

As some alterations were made this morning in the birthday verses, I wanted a small piece of white paper to note them down and paste them in my notebook but on searching for it in the hall, there was none. I had no patience to go home to fetch the paper and so, without any hesitation or fear, I told Bhagavan that I would ask for some from the office. When I went there, they showed me some nice paper. I took one sheet for myself and also said that it would be nice for Bhagavan to write on. "Then take it," they said, and gave me four sheets. I took them to Bhagavan, and suggested that he should use them for his writings, so that those could afterwards be pasted in a book. I asked if the paper should be put on the shelf. He said, "Where is it from? Did you get it from the office?" I said, "Yes". Then he said, "Why do I need it? If you want, you can keep it for yourself. I shall tear bits of paper from the newspapers, keep them carefully and write on them. Why do I need such good paper?" As I could not answer, I put it on the shelf.

It was about 9 a.m. After the post was received and disposed of, Bhagavan began reading the newspaper. He saw there a blank portion of about four inches. He began folding it and tearing it off. He was smiling at me, but I could not understand why. After tearing it off he folded it nicely and, putting it on the shelf, said, "Look, I shall use this paper for my writings. How else could I get any paper? Where can I go to get any? Isn't this good enough for my writings?" I replied, "So this is to teach us a lesson. Bhagavan is always teaching us lessons, but

we are not learning 'them.' Bhagavan smiled and kept quiet.

Sometimes people who receive books by post bring them together with the wrapping. Bhagavan nicely folds the wrapping and says to the attendants, "Look ! Keep this carefully. We shall cover some other book with it. How can we get such paper if we need it ? What is thus acquired is a net gain." Daily the inward letters are brought from the office for Bhagavan's perusal. Amongst them, officials like you fold the paper and write on one side, leaving the rest unused. Bhagavan tears off such bits of unwritten paper and keeps them. The same is the case with pins. After reading the papers, the pins are taken out and handed over to the attendants, saying, "These will be useful when we want them. They will otherwise be merely thrown away. We shall use them. How should we get new ones ? They have to be bought. Where is the money ?

While living on the hill, Bhagavan personally used to prepare ladles, spoons, cups and the like from out of coconut shells. Even recently he used to make cups and spoons of coconut shells and polish them like ivory and tell the attendants, "Look, keep these carefully. They will be useful on occasions. How could we get silver and gold articles ? These are our silver cups and golden spoons. The hands won't get burnt. They won't be contaminated like metalware. It will be pleasant to use them." Not only that ; when he takes any refreshments or Malayalam *kanji* (gruel) Bhagavan uses only those articles.

Whenever Batavia or Kamala oranges and the like are received, the skins are not allowed to be thrown away, but chutneys and pickles are made out of them or they are used

in soup or put to other such uses. Besides this, while taking food, not a morsel is thrown away, or discarded. He thus shows us, by his own example, that not a single useful article should be wasted.

If someone brings roses and presents them, Bhagavan presses them against his eyes, puts them on the clock, eats the petals when they get dry and fall off and gives some of them to those near him. Once when someone brought a rose garland, it was used to decorate the idol in the Mother's temple and afterwards thrown out by the priests into a waste basket along with other flowers. Bhagavan saw that when he went out and, getting angry with them, collected all the petals and had them mixed with *pāyasam* (pudding) which thus got a delicious flavour and excellent taste. On his way to the hill, if he chanced to see any useful leaves, he will pluck them along with his attendants, give instructions about cooking them and thus arrange for a delicious dish. He likes preparations which do not cost anything rather than those that are costly. All this may appear to be quite commonplace, but if we think it over carefully, we will find it a good lesson for us. It means, he teaches us that we could live comfortably on small means.

28th March 1947

(26) DELUSION AND PEACE OF MIND

Yesterday a youth arrived from Andhra Pradesh. From his face he appeared to be simple-minded. He approached Bhagavan this morning and asked, "Swamiji! I came here ten months ago for your *darshan*. I had a desire to

have your *darshan* again now, and immediately I set out and came here. I could not delay even for a moment. Can I do so in future also, whenever I have such a desire ? ”

Bhagavan replied : “ Whatever happens, happens. Everything happens according to what we deserve. Why worry in advance about it ? ”

He again asked : “ Can I come whenever I have such a desire at any time in the future ? Or, should I suppress the desire ? ”

“ Things happen of their own accord, if you stop thinking ahead of the future,” replied Bhagavan.

Question : “ Is it mere mental delusion, not to be able to suppress this desire even for a moment ? ”

Bhagavan looked at me with a smile, and said, “ It seems he came here some time ago, and again had a desire to come here now, and so he came immediately. He is asking me whether he may do so whenever he has such a desire in future.”

The youth intervened and said, “ Whenever I get the desire to see Bhagavan, I am not able to control it even for a moment. I am only asking whether it is mere mental delusion.”

I said, “ How can a desire to have *darshan* of a great person be mere mental delusion ? While there are so many delusions of the mind to be controlled and suppressed, does this desire alone appear to you to be a mental delusion ? ” There was no further question.

There were some Andhra visitors in the hall who had come there on pilgrimage. One of them got up and asked, “ Swamiji ! How does the soul attain peace ? ” Bhagavan replied, laughing, “ What ! What is peace for the soul ? ”

"No, no ! I mean for the mind." "Oh ! for the mind ! The mind attains peace if the *vāsqnās* are suppressed. For that, one must enquire and realise who one is. How can one get peace by merely saying, 'I want peace, I want peace !' without first enquiring what is peace ? First make efforts to recognise and realise what already exists."

There was a Pandit among them. He asked, "Due to some peculiarities, life's journey itself becomes extremely hard in some places. How is one to perform *sādhana* in such places ?"

Bhagavan replied, "The place is within you ; you are not in the place. When you are in all places, where is the question of difficulties in some places, and not in others ? All are within yourself. How can they cause you difficulties ?" "But we get no peace of mind at all in some places," he protested and Bhagavan replied, "That which always exists is peace. That is your natural state. You are not able to recognise your natural state. You get deluded by aberrations which are unreal and feel sorry that there is no peace. If you realise your self, all places will become equally happy."

3rd April 1947.

(27) MOTHER ALAGAMMA

The other day there was a talk in Sri Bhagavan's presence about old songs. Bhagavan said, "Mother used to sing 'Dakshinamurthy Stotra' and other Vedantic songs. They used to be full of meaning. Nobody cares about them

nowadays but it would be very good if they were edited and printed."

On hearing that, I remembered about the old philosophic songs in Telugu also and felt that it would be beneficial spiritually to our ladies if those songs also could be edited and published, and wrote an article about it. In it I mentioned the *Appalam* * song which assumed much prominence in Bhagavan's teachings to Mother Alagamma, and which is considered to be one of the best of songs. When I told Bhagavan that I wanted to send the article to the Telugu magazine *Griha Lakshmi*, he asked me to read it out to him. On hearing it, Bhagavan said, "There is a big story about this song," and at my request he was pleased to narrate it.

"In the early days when mother began to stay with me in Virupaksha cave, there was no cooking. If Echamma or anybody else brought her any food she used to eat it, clean the vessels and then go to bed. That was all. One day she thought I had nothing special to eat and as I was fond of the double *Appalams*, she thought it would be a good idea to make some for me. Being an experienced hand, she could not refrain from doing so. Without my knowledge she asked the Mudaliar old lady, Echamma (a staunch devotee, who served Bhagavan with food till her death) and some others to get everything ready and one evening she set out, saying that she was going to the village. I wanted to see where she was really going, and so when she left, I waited silently under the tree outside. She thought I did not know

* *Appalam* (in Tamil), *Poppadam* (in Malayalam), *Appadam* (in Telugu)—a very thin, round cake made of black gram flour fried crisp.

anything. She went to this house and that, collected all the required things in a big vessel and returned. I closed my eyes and pretended complete ignorance. She put them carefully in the cave and all the visitors left. After night-fall, I ate something and lay down pretending to sleep. Leisurely, she took out the wooden roller, wooden seat, loose flour and the balls of paste etc. and commenced making *Appalams*. There were about two or three hundred to be prepared. She could not prepare them all single-handed. After all, I knew the job. So she quietly began telling me, 'My boy, please help me with it.' I got the opportunity I was waiting for. If I were lenient in this, she would start something else. I wanted to put a timely stop to it. I said, 'You have renounced everything and have come here, haven't you? Why all this? You should rest content with whatever is available. I won't help you. I won't eat them if you prepare them. Make them all for yourself, and eat them yourself.' She was silent for a while and again started saying, 'What, my dear son, please help me a little.' I was adamant. She continued to call me again and again. Feeling it was no use arguing any more, I said, 'All right. You make these *Appalams*. I will make another kind;' and I started singing this '*Appalam*' song. She used to sing a rice song, soup song and other such songs, all with Vedantic meanings. No one appears to have written an *Appalam* song. So I felt I should compose one. She was very fond of songs. So she felt that she could learn another song. By the time the preparation of the *Appalams* was over, my song was also finished. 'I will eat this *Appalam* (the song about the *Appalams*), and you eat those that you have made,' I told her. That happened sometime in 1914 or 1915."

"What a big story ! I wrote it in brief in this essay. This won't do," I said, "Why all this in that essay ?" asked Bhagavan. I said I would write all this in my '*Lekhalu*' (Letters) and Bhagavan agreed to it. He was then reminded of some other incident, and said, "Some time after the *Appalam* song was composed, we all set out one day on *Giri pradakshina*. Someone said, 'Swamiji ! Please tell us the meaning of the *Appalam* song.' I started explaining thus : 'Take the words '*thanugani pancha kosa kshetramunnadu* (in the body with the five elements)'. There are many authorities about the '*pancha kosa kshetra*' in the Bhagavad Gita and other Vedantic texts. I quoted them all. Similarly for every word there are many authorities. I gave them all, explaining their meanings and significance. We finished our round of the hill, and returned to the Virupaksha cave and sat down. I was still explaining. All the essence of the Vedanta is incorporated in that one song. If properly commented upon, it would make a big volume by itself."

I said, "It would have been good if somebody had recorded all that when Bhagavan explained. Who can comment upon the song as Bhagavan does ? Why not somebody record it even now ?"

"That is all very well !" he said laughing. After hearing all the commentary, I said "I am not satisfied with this essay and so I will not send it to *Griha Lakshmi*." Bhagavan said, "Just as you please," and resumed his talk, "Though I was remonstrating with my mother, she slowly started cooking, first a vegetable, then soup, and so on. We went to Skandāsramam afterwards. She used to wander all over the hill, gathering something or other, and saying :

‘He likes this vegetable and that fruit.’ She took no notice of my remonstrations. Once, while she was coming to the jungle at this side, her saree got caught in a thorny bush. It was only then that this path was cleared of all bushes and the like. She said she would not leave me and go anywhere else. If she went anywhere, she was afraid that she might die there. She was particular that she should die in my hands. When Alamelu (Bhagavan’s younger sister) built a new house in their village near Manamadurai, she begged mother just to go over there and see the house, saying she need not stay there at all. She said it was enough if she (mother) just set her foot in it. But she never went. She declined because she was afraid that in case she fell ill there, there might not be trains running properly at that time to bring her back here and in that case, she might not die in her son’s arms. She used to say, ‘Even if you were to throw away my dead body in these thorny bushes I do not mind but I must end this life in your arms.’” As he was saying that, his voice began to falter through emotion. My eyes got moist. I said, “Renunciation should be as firm as that with everybody.” “Yes, yes!” he said and was silent. Because she said, “Even if you were to throw away my body in these thorny bushes,” we now see that the place of her burial is adorned by a temple fit to be worshipped by kings and emperors.

4th April 1947

(28) HUMAN EFFORT

A devotee who was a frequent visitor to the Asramam arrived two or three days ago, and ever since his arrival he has been looking all round the hall frequently. I was expecting him to ask Bhagavan some questions. This afternoon he sat near Bhagavan and slowly commenced asking questions : "Swamiji ! Everyone in this hall is seated with his eyes closed. Do all of them get results ?" "Certainly ! Each person will get results according to his thoughts," Bhagavan replied humorously.

Question : *Vāsishtam* also says the same thing. In some places it is stated that human effort is the source of all strength. In others it is said that it is all divine grace. It is not clear which of them is free and which is dependent.

Bhagavan : Yes, they say that there is no God other than the karmas of the previous birth, that the karma done in the present birth in accordance with *sāstrās* is known as *purushakāra*, (human effort), that the previous and present karmas meet for a head-on fight like rams, that the one that is weaker gets eliminated and that is why they say one should strengthen *purushakāra*. If it is asked what is the origin of karma, they say, such a question should not be raised as it is like the eternal question, which is earlier, the seed or the tree ? Such a question is for mere argument and not for deciding finally what is what. That is why I say, first find out who you are. If one asks 'Who am I ? How did I get this *dosha* (fault) of life ?' Then there will be Self-realisation, *dosha* will get eliminated and *shānti*

will be obtained. Why even obtained? It (the Self) remains as it IS."

In *Vāsishtam*, in the fourth Canto of *Mumukshu Vyavahāra* chapter, there are *slokās* containing this *bhava* (import) :

कोऽहं कथमयं दोषः संसाराख्य उपागतः ।

न्यायेनेति परामर्शो विचार इति कथ्यते ।

विचारात् ज्ञायते तत्त्वं तत्त्वाद्विश्रान्तिरात्मनि ।

अतो मनसि शान्तत्वं सर्वदुःख परिक्षयः ।

"Who am I? How did this faulty *samsāra* come into being? Such investigation is known as the Path of Enquiry (*Vichāra*). By *Vichāra* Reality is understood, and such understanding brings repose in the Self; then follow tranquillity of mind and cessation of all sorrow."

(29) HEADSHIP OF A MUTT

5th April 1947

The same devotee who questioned Bhagavan yesterday about human effort in the individual's action, today told him about his ill health, treatment by doctors and services rendered to him by his servants and said, "Swamiji! We are unable to keep this body of ours in good condition and so entrust it to the care of doctors and servants. When the body itself is not under our control, what is the use of people talking of reforming the world?"

Do you know that for the last five or six months Bhagavan is not allowing anybody to touch his legs or massage them with oil, and that he himself does it whenever

necessary? Hence he did not reply to the devotee's question immediately, but in the evening, when the devotees all gathered, he began massaging his legs with oil, and looking at the questioner with a smile, said, "We are our own doctors and our own servants." Again the questioner said, "What are we to do if we do not have Bhagavan's strength to attend to our own work?" Bhagavan's reply was, "If we have strength to eat, why should we not have strength to do this?" The questioner could not say anything and so kept silent with bent head. Just then the Post arrived. After looking through the letters, Bhagavan began narrating as follows :

"Once a certain *sannyāsi* was anxious to be the head of a Mutt. He had to have disciples, you see. He tried his level best to secure some. Any one who came, soon found out the limited knowledge of the person and so went away. No one stayed on. What could he do? One day he had to go to a city. There he had to keep up his position; but he had no disciple. No one must know this. His bundle of clothes etc. was on his head. So, he thought he would place the bundle in some house unobserved and then pretend to go there afterwards. He wandered throughout the place. Whenever he tried to step into a house, he found a number of people in front of it. Poor chap! What could he do? It was almost evening. He was tired. At last, he found a house with no one in front. The door was open. Greatly relieved, he placed the bundle in one corner of the house and then sat in the verandah. After a while the lady of the house came out and enquired of him who he was. 'Me! I am the head of a Mutt in such and such a place. I came to this city on some work. I heard that you were good householders.

I therefore sent my belongings through my disciple to put them in your house thinking that we could put up with you for the night and go away next morning. Has he done so ? 'No one has come, sir,' she said. 'No, please. I asked him to put the bundle here, go to the bazar and get some things. Kindly see if he has put it in any corner,' he said. When the lady searched this side and that, she saw the bundle in one corner. Thereupon her husband and she welcomed him and gave him food etc. Rather late in the night, they asked, 'How is it, sir, your disciple has not come yet ?' He said, 'Perhaps that useless fellow has eaten something in the bazar and is wandering about. You please go to bed. If he comes, I will open the door for him.'

"That couple had, by then, understood the *sannyāsi's* true position. They thought they would see further fun and so went into the house to lie down. Then the person started his acting. He opened the door and closed it, making a loud noise so as to be heard by the members of the household. He then said loudly, 'Why! What have you been doing so long? Take care, if you do it again, I shall beat you black and blue. Be careful henceforth.' Changing his tone thereafter, he said in a plaintive voice, 'Swami, Swami, please excuse me. I shall not do it again.' Assuming the original tone, he said, 'All right. Come here, massage my legs, here ; no, there ; please hit lightly with your fists. Yes, a little more.' So saying, he massaged his own legs and then said : 'Enough ; it is rather late, go to bed.' So saying he went to sleep. There was a hole in the wall of the room where the couple were staying and through it they saw the whole farce. In the early morning the *sannyāsi* again began repeating the evening's perform-

ance, saying, 'You lazy fellow! The cocks have begun to crow. Go to so and so's house and come back after doing such and such work.' So saying, he opened the door, pretended to send him away and went back to bed. The couple saw this also. In the morning he bundled up his belongings, put the bundle in a corner, and went to a tank nearby for bathing etc. The couple took the bundle and hid it somewhere. The *sannyāsi* returned and searched the whole room but the bundle was not found anywhere. So he asked the lady of the house, 'Where is my bundle?' The couple then replied, 'Sir, your disciple came here and took away the bundle saying you wanted him to bring it to you. It is the same person who massaged your legs last night. He must be round the corner. Please see, Swami.' What could he do then? He kept his mouth shut and started going home.

"This is what happens if a disciple serves you. Just like me, we are our own servants." So saying, Bhagavan pretended to massage his legs with his hands and his fists.

6th April 1947

(30^f) REGULATING SLEEP, DIET AND MOVEMENTS

Yesterday, a devotee asked Bhagavan, "Swamiji! One has to meditate in order to enquire about his self. When I sit for meditation, I go to sleep. What can I do? Is there any way out?" Bhagavan replied, "First learn to be awake when you are in the wakeful state. Then we can think of the sleeping state. We dream of many things even

when we are awake. We must learn to guard ourselves against them in our waking state. All that we see about us is a dream. We should wake up from this dream world."

The questioner said, "*Sādhana* is required to acquire that carefulness. Whenever I decide upon some principle and try to do *sādhana*, I get sleepy. Will Bhagavan kindly tell me how to overcome this sleepiness?"

Bhagavan replied: "Of the *āvarana-vikshepas* (obstructions and disturbances), the first *āvarana* is sleep. We must try as far as possible not to succumb to it. We must enquire why we get sleepy and regulate our food, movements, etc. and see that we do not feel sleepy, but it is no use trying to stop it when once we are asleep. Don't we get sleepy if we eat heartily? Then the head begins to nod as we sit for meditation. It seems some tie their hair to a nail in the wall to keep them awake. Except that they wake up when their head nods, what use is it for *dhyāna*? My boyhood experience of sleep was well-known. While the school lessons were being taught, lest I should fall asleep I used to tie a thread to the nail on the wall, and tie my hair to it. When the head nods, the thread is pulled tight and this used to wake me. Otherwise, the teacher used to twist my ears and wake me up." So saying, Bhagavan began to laugh.

"Is it possible Bhagavan is concocting all these stories and telling us?" asked Muruganar.

"No, no! It is true! I used to do all that because I was afraid the teacher would punish me for not listening to his lessons. That was the state in those days. In the early days after my coming here, when I closed my eyes,

deeply absorbed in meditation, I hardly knew whether it was day or night. If at any time I opened my eyes and looked I used to wonder whether it was night or day. I had no food and no sleep. When there is movement of the body, you need food. If you have food, you need sleep. If there is no movement, you do not need sleep. Very little food is enough to sustain life. That used to be my experience. Somebody or other used to offer me a tumblerful of some liquid diet whenever I opened my eyes. That was all. But one thing, except when one is in absorbed motionless concentration of mind, is it possible to give up sleep or food altogether, when the body and mind are engaged in the ordinary pursuits of life? If you give up food and sleep, the body reels. Therefore it must be said that limitation of food and movement is very necessary for the elevation of the soul. Great people restrict their sleep to the barest minimum possible so that they may not waste their time but use it for the performance of selfless good deeds. Some say that it is healthy to go to bed at 10 p.m. and wake up at 2 a.m. That means that four hours' sleep is enough. Some say that four hours' sleep is not enough, but that it should be six hours. It amounts to this, that sleep and food should not be indulged in to excess. That is true. If you want to cut off any item completely, your mind will always be directed towards it. Therefore the *sādhaka* should allot moderate time for each item," said Bhagavan.

This is what is stated in the Bhagavad Gita :—

नात्यश्नतस्तु योगोऽस्ति न चैकान्तमनश्नतः ।

न चातिस्वप्नशीलस्य जाग्रतो नैव चार्जुन । (VI: 16)

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।

युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा । (VI: 17)

"Yoga is not for him who eats too much, nor who abstains to excess, nor who is too much addicted to sleep nor even to wakefulness. Yoga kills out all pain for him who is regulated in eating and amusement, regulated in performing actions, regulated in sleeping and waking."

7th April 1947

(31) DEVOTION WITHOUT IRREGULARITY

Yesterday I wrote to you what Bhagavan told us about limitation of sleep, diet and movements. He teaches this in various ways by his own practical example. He does not take milk and is nowadays eating only one Iddly for breakfast daily saying that a man who sits without doing any physical work does not require two. So also with his midday meal. Mixed with curry and all that, each meal amounts only to about a handful of rice. Even that he does not eat each dish separately as we do for taste. He makes a ball of the vegetable, chutney, soup etc. and then mixes it with rice and eats. In the course of the conversation one day, he said, "It would be more tasty to eat the rice with only one dish instead of so many. Why so many dishes? We used to eat only a single dish in the olden days. I have not given up that practice even now. While I was on the hill many people used to bring rice, fruit and sweets. Whatever they brought, I used to eat only as much as could be lifted with three fingers. I used to eat some of whatever they brought so that the whole day's in-take of the food eaten did not amount to

a handful. That method of feeding used to give me much happiness. Nowadays they spread a leaf and serve several things on it. As I cannot waste anything, I eat them and feel heavy thereafter." Bhagavan occasionally speaks like that.

So also as regards sleep. On special festival occasions such as the birthdāy celebrations (Jayanthi) and Maha Puja, the students do not commence the Vedic recitations at the *Brahma Muhūrtham* time (a couple of hours before sun rise), being tired with work on the previous night, but Bhagavan gets up as usual and keep himself ready. If he is ever in ill health and his personal attendants request him to sleep a little longer, he replies, "What is the point in sleeping at the time of the *Brahma Muhūrtham*? If you want, you may sleep."

In *Dhanurmāsam* (December-January), *pūja* starts in Arunachaleśwara temple early in the morning. By the time of the first firing of the gun there, Bhagavan gets up here. People who do the Tamil *pārāyana* may take some time to get up and come here, but he is always ready to receive them. Of course, movement also is limited. It is said that all these restrictions are only for *sādhaks* and not for *jnānis*. But *jnānis* also observe all this discipline for the welfare of the world. They never slip down from the pinnacle of complete dispassion. Devotion to principle, determination etc., which do not transgress Nature's laws are normal for them. Their actions are all lessons for us.

8th April 1947

(32) BLESSINGS

Recently, elder brother's children, Sastri and Murthi, wrote a letter to Bhagavan as follows : "To *Chiranjeevi* Bhagavan *Thāthayya* (grandfather), *Namaskārams*. Do you know of a *mantram* that gets us whatever we want? If so, please send it to us in writing immediately. Your grandchildren, Sastri and Murthi."

When I said, "What do they mean by writing '*Chiranjeevi Thāthayya*?' Silly" (*Chiranjeevi* means 'long life', and is used by elders in addressing younger people). Sundaresa Iyer remarked : "They have written correctly. Who else can be *Chiranjeevi* than Bhagavan? They bow to the grandfather who lives eternally. They wanted him to bless them so as to get whatever they want. What is wrong?" Bhagavan said with a smile, "In my younger days I wrote a similar letter to my uncle's son Ramaswamy. I stayed with them for some time in Dindigul where I was studying. I came to Tiruchuli during a vacation. I wanted to write a letter to Ramaswamy. I did not know what to write. In the letters written to him by my father I noticed him writing '*aseervādams* (blessings) to Ramaswamy'. That was enough. I also began to write to him '*aseervādams* to brother-in-law'. He was older than myself, but I did not know that I should write '*namaskārams*'. I thought it would be the same for all people. I realised this mistake when he laughed at me for this."

One devotee said, "I believe Bhagavan was very familiar with that Ramaswamy." Bhagavan replied, "Yes, in the place where my picture is now placed in the Sundara

Mandiram in Tiruchuli, there used to be a tape cot. My father used to sleep on it. No one else but Ramaswamy and myself could take the liberty of getting on it. When father was not in town, we two used to sleep on it together. No one had any familiarity with him except Ramaswamy because he had no mother, and myself because I was by nature very forward in such matters. His was a towering personality."

That devotee said, "Did that Ramaswamy ever come here?" Bhagavan said, "He came here once long back. To move out of his place was a great problem for him. People who had been here used to tell him about me, it seems. He had been putting off his visit to this place from time to time when this Viswanath ran away from home saying he did not want to marry and came here. He is the son of Ramaswamy. He thought he could take Viswanath back. After all, it being the case of his own son, he could not help coming here. Viswanath himself got a letter saying that he was coming. Without telling me that news, he (Viswanath) gave me that letter saying, 'the Dindigul mountain has started moving'. On looking into the letter I understood what he meant. Ramaswamy came here the very next day. Recently, while writing letters to me, he himself has begun writing, '*namaskārams* to Swami'. He writes, 'Swami should bless me'. It means he received my blessings even when I was young and living with him. Whoever expected at that time, that it would turn out like this? I wrote something. That was all."

9th April 1947

(33) A BOUQUET OF PRECEPTS

Yesterday morning, a group of Andhras arrived, and started questioning Bhagavan within ten minutes of their arrival.

Question : "Bhagavan teaches us always to know ourselves. He should kindly teach us how to know ourselves, and bless us."

Bhagavan's reply : "The kindness is always there. You should ask for something that is not there, and not for something that is there already. You should believe with all your heart that the kindness is there. That is all."

Another said : "In the Vedic recitations that are conducted here daily, they say, '*thasya sikhāyā madhye paramātmā vyavasthīhaha*'. What is '*sikhāyā madhye*' (in the middle of the summit) ?"

Bhagavan's reply : "'*Sikhāyā madhye*' means, 'in the middle of the summit of the fire' and not 'in the tuft of the hair of the Vedas'. It means that the Paramatma resides in the centre of the fire of Knowledge that is generated by churning of the Vedas."

Question : "In what *āsana* is Bhagavan usually seated ?"

Bhagavan : "In what *āsana*? In the *āsana* of the heart. Wherever it is pleasant, there is my *āsana*. That is called *sukhāsana*, the *āsana* of happiness. That *āsana* of the heart is peaceful, and gives happiness. There is no need for any other *āsana*, for those who are seated in that one."

Another said: "The Gita says, '*sarva dharmān parithyajya māmekam śaranam vraja*' (discard all *dharmās*, and seek refuge in Me). What are the *dharmās* that are conveyed by the expression '*sarva dharmān*'?"

Bhagavan: "'*Sarva dharmān*' means 'all the *dharmās* of life'. '*Parithyajya*' means 'having discarded those *dharmās*'. '*Māmekam*' means 'Me, the *Ekaswarūpa* (the only one Self)'. '*Śaranam vraja*' means 'take refuge'."

Question: "The expression '*hridaya granthi bhedanam*' occurs in Sri Prāmāṇa Gita. What is meant by it?"

Answer: "That is what I say, 'going away', 'exit', 'extinction of all *vāsanās*', 'destruction of the ego', 'I', 'destruction of *jivathva*', 'destruction of the mind' — and so many other names. All mean the same thing — *manonāśanam* (destruction of the mind) is *hridaya granthi bhedanam*. The word *jñānam* also means the same thing. Some technical word for the sake of recognising."

When the conversation started, a servant switched on the fan, finding it to be stuffy in the hall. Bhagavan got it stopped, remarking 'why this?' and turning to those nearby said, "Look here! Many people ask how anyone can continue to engage in performing karma after he has become a *jñāni*. In reply to that question, in the olden days, they used to quote the potter's wheel as a comparison. As the wheel turns round and round, the pot emerges. Even after the pot is finished and the turning of the wheel has stopped, the wheel does not stop revolving for some time longer. In these days we can cite the example of the electric fan. We switched it off, but it did not stop revolving for some time after. Similarly, even after one becomes

a *jnāni*, he does not give up the physical body so long as actions which he is destined to perform with it remain unfinished."

Suddenly a little baby of about eight months began to prattle "Thatha, Thatha" behind my back. When Bhagavan heard those sweet words, he lifted his head and asked who it was. I said, "It is our little child Mangalam". Bhagavan is very fond of babies. He said, "Is it she? I thought it is some older girl. Has she already begun to call out 'Thatha, Thatha'?" The child continued to say, "Thatha, Thatha". Bhagavan said to those nearby, "See this wonder! Children first begin to say the word 'Thatha' which means '*thān thān*'. '*Thānthān*'—'it is its own self'—it is the same with our minds also. The word 'I' comes out first, automatically. Only thereafter the words 'you', 'he', etc. are uttered,—just as all other words follow the word '*thatha*' in the case of little children. It is only after the feeling '*aham*' 'ego' comes that the other feelings follow."

It was nearly 9 o'clock, and so Krishnaswamy turned on the radio to verify the time. After the clock struck nine the radio ended with the words '*namasthe* to all'. Bhagavan smiled and said, "The Radio announcer says, '*namasthe* to all' as if he and they were different. Is he not one of them? It amounts to this, that he is saluting himself also. They do not realise that. That is the strange thing."

10th April 1947

(34) ABSOLUTE SURRENDER

This morning, an Andhra youth handed over a letter to Bhagavan in which it was written : "Swamiji ! They say that one can obtain everything if one takes refuge in God wholly and solely, and without thought of any other. Does it mean sitting still at one place, and contemplating God entirely at all times, discarding all thoughts, including even about food which is essential for the sustenance of the body ? Does it mean that when one gets ill, one should not think of medicine and treatment, but entrust one's health or sickness exclusively to Providence ? From the definition of *sthitha prajna* given in Gita,

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान्पुमांश्चरति निस्पृहः ।

निर्ममो निरहंकारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति । (II. 71)

"The man who sheds all longing and moves without concern, free from the sense of 'I' and 'mine', he attains peace."

"It means the discarding of all desires. Therefore should we devote ourselves exclusively to the contemplation of God, and accept food, water etc. only if they are available by God's grace, without asking for them ? Or does it mean that we should make a little effort ? Bhagavan ! Please explain the secret of this *śaranāgathi*."

Bhagavan saw that letter and leisurely told his neighbours "Look ! '*Ananya śaranāgathi*' means to be without any attachment or thoughts, no doubt, but does it mean to discard thoughts even of food and water etc. which are essential for the sustenance of the physical body ? He asks,

‘should I eat only if I get anything by God’s direction, and without my asking for it? Or should I make a little effort?’ All right! Let us take it that what we have to eat comes of its own accord. But even then, who is to eat? Suppose somebody puts it in our mouth, should we not swallow it, at least? Is that not an effort? He asks, ‘if I become sick, should I take medicine or should I keep quiet leaving my health and sickness in the hands of God?’ ‘*Kshudvyādeh aahāram*’, it is said. There are two meanings to this. One is, since *kshuth* i.e. hunger, is also like sickness, so for the sickness called hunger, the medicine called food must be given; the other is: like medicine for *vyādhi* (sickness), food for *kshuth* (hunger) must be given. In the book ‘*Sādhana Panchakam*’ written by Śankara, it is stated, ‘*kshudvyādhischa chikitsyatām pratidinam bhikshoshadham bhujiyatām*’. It means, for treatment of the disease called hunger, eat food received as alms. But then, one must at least go out for *bhiksha*. If all people close their eyes and sit still saying if the food comes, we eat, how is the world to get on? Hence one must take things as they come in accordance with one’s traditions and must be free from the feeling that one is doing them oneself. The feeling that I am doing it is bondage. It is therefore necessary to consider and find out the method whereby such a feeling can be overcome, instead of falling into doubts as to whether medicine should be administered if one is sick or whether food should be taken if one is hungry, as such doubts will continue to come up and will never end. Even such doubts as, ‘May I groan if there is pain? May I inhale air after exhaling?’ also occur. Call it *Iswara* or call it *karma*; some *Kartā* will carry on everything in this world according to the development of the mind of each individual. If

the responsibility is thrown at him (the *Kartā*) and you keep yourself from bondage, things will go on of their own accord. We walk on this ground. While doing so, do we consider at every step whether we should raise one leg after the other or stop at some stage? Isn't the walking done automatically? The same is the case with inhaling and exhaling. No special effort is made to inhale or exhale. The same is the case with this life also. Can we give up anything if we want to or do anything as we please? Quite a number of things are done automatically without our being conscious of it. Complete surrender to God means giving up all other thoughts and concentrating the mind on Him. To the extent we can concentrate on Him, other thoughts disappear. If *mano-vāk-kāya karmās* i.e. the actions of the mind, speech and body are merged with God, all the burdens of our life will be on Him. Lord Krishna told Arjuna in the Gita :

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् । (IX : 22)

“To those men who worship Me alone, thinking of no other, to those ever harmonious, I bring full Security.”

Arjuna, had to do the fighting. So Krishna said, ‘Place all the burden on Me, do your duty ; you are merely an instrument. I will see to everything. Nothing will bother you.’ But then, before one surrenders to God, one should know who it is that surrenders. Unless all thoughts are given up ‘there can’t be surrender. When there are no thoughts at all, what remains is only the Self. So surrender will only be to one’s own Self. If surrender is in terms of *bhakti*, the burden should be thrown on God, and if it

is in terms of karma, karma should be performed until one knows one's own Self. The result is the same in either case. Surrender means to enquire and know about one's own Self and then remain in the Self. What is there apart from the Self ? ”

That young man said, “What is the path by which it can be known ?” Bhagavan replied : “In the Gita several paths are indicated. You are asked to do *dhyāna*. If you are not able to do it, then *bhakti*, or yoga or *nishkāma karma*. Many more have been indicated. Any one of the paths must be followed. One's own self is always there. Things happen automatically in accordance with the *samskāras* (the fruits of the actions of previous births). The feeling that the doer is ‘I’ is itself bondage. If the feeling is got rid of by *vichāra*, these questions do not arise. *Saranāgathi* is not the mere act of sitting with closed eyes. If all sit like that, how are they to get on in this world ?” While Bhagavan was speaking, the bell of the dining hall rang. “There goes the bell ; should we not go ?” So saying with a smile, Bhagavan got up.

17th April 1947

(35) DREAM VISIONS

The day before yesterday at about 8 or 9 in the morning, an elderly man of a middle class family, who knew Ayurveda, came to Bhagavan, prostrated before him and said, “Swami, this is good for phlegm, take it.” He wanted to give some medicine. When the attendants tried to prevent him from giving it, Bhagavan stopped them, took the

medicine, and told the attendants, "Look, he used to give me some medicine or other now and then from the time I was living on the hill. Let him give it. Perhaps he has had some dream." With evident pleasure, the old man said, "I have not had any dream now, Swami. You used to have excess of phlegm at this time of the year, didn't you? So I have brought it." So saying he bowed and went away.

As soon as he had left, a devotee sitting near Bhagavan asked, "What about the dream you referred to?" Bhagavan replied: "Oh that! While living on the hill, one evening, I casually asked Palaniswamy if he had a lime fruit. He said, 'No.' 'If so, don't worry' I said. It seems that very night this person dreamed that I had asked him for a lime fruit. Next morning, as I came out to go somewhere, he was already there and said, 'Swami, take this lime fruit!' 'Yesterday, I asked him (Palaniswamy) if he had one. How did you know about it?' I asked. In reply, he said, 'You appeared to me in my dream and told me that you wanted a lime fruit. That is why I have brought it now;' and he placed the fruit in my hand. That is how it happened." The devotee asked, "Is it a fact that Bhagavan appeared to him in a dream?" Bhagavan replied with a smile, "I don't know. Who knows? He said so. That is all."

Another devotee asked, "K. K. Nambiar's note-book also happened to be brought here in the same way, isn't it?" Bhagavan replied, "Yes, that is so. At that time Madhavan was here. I was telling him to take out from the bureau a long note-book with a black cover so that I could write a commentary on

Sri Ramana Gita in Malayalam and copy it out in that note-book. He said he would get me it but forgot about it for four or five days. Meanwhile Nambiar came here and gave me a note-book of the exact size and description I was asking for. When I asked him how it was that he had brought a note-book of the sort I was asking for, he said, 'Bhagavan appeared to me in a dream and asked me for a note-book describing the number of pages, the breadth and length. When I went to the shop, I found one of the exact description. I have brought it.' In the meantime, Madhavan came. I said to him, 'Look, here is the book. You have given it to me, haven't you?' He was surprised and, remembering my instructions, took out my note-book from the bureau which was found to be exactly of the same size. It was just sufficient for *Sri Ramana Gita* with the slokas and the commentary. As soon as that work was over, Nambiar came and took it away, saying he would get it printed but at the same time hesitated to hand over the book containing Bhagavan's handwriting to the press. So, he got another copy made out which he sent to the press and kept the original himself. It must still be with him. Even Rajagopalan did almost the same thing once. As the stock of our ink was finished I told the people here once or twice as replenish it. The next day, or the day after he brought a big jar of ink while returning from some place. When I asked him how he came to know that the ink was finished here, he said that Bhagavan appeared to him in a dream and told him that ink was needed. 'So I brought it,' he said. That is how things happen from time to time," said Bhagavan.

That devotee said, "They say that Bhagavan himself told them. Are these all facts?" Bhagavan replied, "What

do I know? They said so. That is all." The devotee again said, "Even so, isn't it surprising that what was not available here should occur to them in a dream?" Bhagavan nodded his head in approval and kept quiet.

18th April 1947

(36) DIVINE VISIONS

This morning, at 8 o'clock, Bhagavan looked at an old man who was coming into the hall and asked me, "Do you know who this is?" I said 'No'. "He is the husband of my cousin sister who, it is stated in my biography, was suckled by my mother along with me," said Bhagavan. (His name is Manamadurai Ramaswamy Iyer). "What is her name?" I asked. "Meeniakshi," said Bhagavan. Saying that I had seen that gentleman from time to time but never known the relationship, I asked another devotee sitting nearby whether he knew him. He said, "Why? I know him well. Bhagavan gave *darshan* to that lady at the time of her death." "Is that so?" I asked Bhagavan with some surprise. Bhagavan replied thus: "Yes. It happened in her case the same way as in the case of Nāyanā at Tiruvottiyur. It seems I went near and touched her. She got up startled and said, 'Who is it that has touched me?' That is all. She woke up immediately after that. It transpired subsequently that this happened in the last moments of her life."

"Did she tell anyone there about this experience?" I asked. "We enquired about that but she was not at

that time in a condition to speak," said Bhagavan. "That means, you had blessed her with your *darshan* in the same way as in the case of Nāyanā. Would the privilege of the drinking of milk from your mother go to waste?" I said. "Yes, that is so. Mother used to give her breast milk to both of us. I was drinking mother's milk till I was five years of age. If my father saw, he used to scold her, saying, 'What is this giving of milk to a grown up child like that?' So I used to wait until he had gone and then drink milk. Mother had plenty of milk," said Bhagavan.

A devotee asked, "Why does Bhagavan call Ganapathi Sastri Nāyanā (Nāyanā means father)?" "There is a reason for it," he replied, "It is my custom to address all people with respect. Moreover, he was older than me. I therefore always used to call him Ganapathi Sastri Garu. That was very distressing to him and so he begged me times out of number not to do so, saying, 'Am I not your disciple? You should call me by a familiar name. This is very unfair.' I did not pay any heed to his protests. At last one day he insisted on my giving up the formal way of addressing him and adopting a familiar one. All his disciples call him 'Nāyanā', you see. So I made it an excuse and said I too would call him 'Nāyanā' like the others. He agreed to it because 'Nāyanā' means a child and a disciple could be addressed as one's own child. I agreed because 'Nāyanā' also means 'father' and hence it would not matter so far as I was concerned. I was still addressing him in respectful terms. Whenever I asked him to come here or go there he was still uncomfortable because after all that he had done, I continued to talk to him with the respect due to elders," said Bhagavan.

I said, "You stated that Meenakshi was not in a condition to tell others about the *darshan* she had. That is all right, but Nāyanā did tell others about the *darshan* he had, didn't he? In Védantic language, what do they say about similar experience; that two people have at the same time?" Bhagavan said, with a smile, "They are called '*divya darshanās*' (divine visions)."

20th April 1947

(37) THE WHITE PEACOCK

On the 12th instant someone brought a white peacock, saying it was sent by the Rani of Baroda and offered it as a gift to the Asramam in Bhagavan's presence. On seeing it, Bhagavan said, "Isn't it enough that ten or twelve coloured peacocks are here? They may come to fight with this one because it is of a different variety. Besides that, it has to be protected against attacks of cats. Why this? It is better to keep it in its own place." That person took no notice but went away leaving the peacock here. It was thereupon decided that Krishnaswami should look after its welfare and the others should help him.

The other day when I went to the Asramam in the afternoon Bhagavan was telling the devotees near him about the peacock. "Look! A merchant manufacturing matchboxes brought a little deer called Valli and went away similarly leaving it here. It used to be roaming about in the Asramam. When Bengal gram dhall and *mura muras*

were mixed together and placed in a plate, it used to eat all the dhal without sprinkling even a grain outside, leaving the *mura mura*s. After some time when it began going to the forest with the goat-herds, people who knew that it belonged to the Asramam used to bring it back here. Subsequently, it used to come back of its own accord. So we let it go. One day, when some *pañchamās* broke its leg, hoping to kill and eat it, a person who knew that it belonged to the Asramam took pity on it and brought it back, carrying it all the way. It was bleeding. We nursed it but without success and after some days, it breathed its last in my lap. Annamalaiswami and I built a samadhi near the steps on the side of the hill yonder."

Astonished at this, I said, "We see here ourselves what the ancients said that in Bharatakhanda (Continent of India) God comes down as an Avatar and gives *moksha* to animals and birds also."

Meanwhile, Krishnaswami caught the peacock and brought it back as it had run away. Bhagavan, placing his hand on its neck and massaging it upto the heart with the other hand, said "You naughty chap, where did you go? How can we manage to look after you, if you go away like this? Please don't. There will be cruel animals elsewhere. Why not stay on here 'round about the hall?" Thus he cajoled it.

For a long time after that it did not go out of the Asramam but learnt to go about the various structures within the Asramam compound. Seeing that, Bhagavan used to say, "It is now like the *Sarvādhikāri*." This afternoon at 2-30 when I went there, the radio was playing and the electric fan was revolving. The peacock sat by the side of

the radio, with closed eyes as if it was immersed in *dhyāna*. Seeing that, one person said, "See how carefully it is listening." Bhagavan said, "Yes. The peacocks are very fond of music, especially if it is from the flute."

"Though this peacock is white, it is the other peacocks that are really beautiful," someone said. Pointing to the peacock, Bhagavan said, "If it is like this, it has a beauty of its own. Those peacocks have many beautiful colours. This is pure white without the mixture of any other colours. That means it is *suddha satva* (pure self) without the mixture of other *gunās* (attributes). See, in Vedantic language, the peacock also can be taken as an example. Even the other peacocks do not have so many colours at birth. They have only one colour. As they grow up, they get so many colours. When their tails grow, they have any number of eyes. See how many colours and how many eyes! Our mind also is like that. At birth, there are no perversities. Subsequently, there will be ever so many activities and ideas, like the colours of the peacock."

24th April 1947

(38) WHICH IS THE FOOT AND
WHICH IS THE HEAD ?

This afternoon at 3 O'clock, a devotee stood near Bhagavan's sofa and said, "Swami, I have only one desire, namely to put my head on Bhagavan's foot and do *namas-kār* (obeisance). Bhagavan must grant me this favour." "Oh! is that the desire! But then which is the foot and

which is the head?" asked Bhagavan. No reply. After pausing for a while Bhagavan said, "Where the self merges, that is the foot." "Where is that place?" asked that devotee. "Where? It is in one's own self. The feeling 'I' 'I', the ego, is the head. Where that *aham vritti* (ego) dissolves, that is the foot of the Guru."

"It is said that *bhakti* should be like mother, father, guru and god, but if the individual self gets dissolved, how is it possible to serve them with *bhakti*?" he asked. Bhagavan said, "What is the meaning of the individual self getting dissolved? It means, making that *bhakti* broad-based. Everything is from one's own self. Hence, if one is in one's own self, one gets the *shakti* (energy) to broad-base them all." That devotee said, "Does dissolving one's self in its own place mean that with *buddhi* (developed mind) one discards the *annamaya* and other *kosās* (sheaths of the body) and after that discards *buddhi* itself?" Bhagavan replied, "Where do you go if you discard *buddhi*? The remaining of *buddhi* in its own state is the knowing of one's own state. To eliminate or discard the various elements mentioned already, *buddhi* must be used like a punishing rod. The *buddhi* is described as of two parts, unclean and clean. When it is associated with the work of the *antahkarana* it is stated to be unclean. That is known as mind and *ahankāra*. When *buddhi* is used as a punishing rod to drive away those things and to give the inspiration of the self (*aham sphurana*) i.e. 'I', it is known as clean *buddhi*. If that is caught and the rest is discarded, that which is, remains as it is."

Further questioning was, "It is said that that *buddhi* must be made one with *Ātma*. How is that?" Bhagavan

replied, "How can it be made one with, when it is not a thing which comes from outside. It is within oneself. The feeling or the shadow of Atma is *buddhi*. If that *buddhi*, the static thing, is known, one remains as one's own self. Some call that '*buddhi*', some '*shakti*' and some call it '*aham*'. Whatever the name, it must be caught hold of firmly to drive away all that comes from elsewhere.

15th May 1947

(39) SUICIDE

This afternoon, a young man from Tiruchirapalli side wrote a letter and handed it over to Bhagavan. The gist of that letter is, that countless people in the country are suffering for want of food, that there is any amount of commotion, that we are unable to see their troubles, that Bhagavan must give out some plan to alleviate the suffering and that elders like him should not remain unconcerned like this.

Bhagavan read it and looking at him critically said, "Is that what you want? You say that you are suffering at the sight of their troubles. Does that mean that you yourself are all right, unlike them and are happy?" "No, I am also suffering in one way or other," said that young man. "Ah! that is the trouble. You do not know what is your own happiness, and yet you are worried about others. Is it possible to make all people similar? If all get into the palanquin, who is to carry it? If all are kings, what is the point of saying that any one is a king? Some people will be known as wealthy only if others are poor.

A *jnāni* can be recognised only when there are ignorant people. Darkness will be known only when there is light. Happiness will be known only if there is suffering. Food will be tasteful only if there is hunger. Hence, help can be rendered only to the extent possible but if it is desired to make all people equally happy, that will never be possible. Any number of leaders of the country are working. Some of them say the work that has been contemplated has not been finished properly and so they will lecture. What for? People come out as leaders one after another and work is going on. There must be one *shakti* directing them all. If we throw the burden on that force with the confidence that it can do what is required and be free from worry, things will somehow go on. Some preach against the killing of animals. If people do not listen to them, they say they will fast unto death, 'we will commit suicide or we will give up life'. If one says he will commit suicide, if others do not give up killing animals, is not suicide itself a killing of a living being? They think suicide is merely leaving the body. Is not the body a part of the self? Atma is always there, at all times and all places. Instead of looking at the Self which is real and permanent, if one looks upon the body etc. as one's own self, it is suicide. What other murder could there be than that? He who is able to see his own self by knowledge and wisdom will not be moved by whatever conflicts may come about. He will look upon the sorrows and happiness of the world as mere acting on a stage. In his view the whole world is a stage. On that stage the same man once puts on the dress of a king, another time of a minister, next a servant, washerman, barber, and many other dresses, and acts appropriately on each occasion but as he is conscious of his real self and

knows that he is not any one of those whose parts he is acting, he does not worry about the various vicissitudes of life he depicts on such occasion. In the same manner, the world is a stage of Iswara. In that stage you are an actor. You may help to the extent of your ability, but you cannot make all people equal. It has not been possible in the past for anybody to do so and it will not be possible in future either."

The young man said, "Because of all this, there is no peace in this world. I am unhappy about that." "Look, you have come again to the point where you began," Bhagavan replied. "Instead of feeling concerned about there being no peace in the world, it is better to enquire and find out how you will get peace in this world. If you give up that objective, what is the use of worrying yourself about the lack of peace in the world? If one's mind had peace, the whole world will appear peaceful. Tell me, have you that peace?" asked Bhagavan. That person said, "No". "Ah! that is the thing. You do not have peace. You do not know how to secure that peace. If instead of trying to gain that peace you attempt to secure peace for the world, it is like one who has no food, asking for food for himself which, if given, he says he will use to feed any number of other people. Something like the lame man who said, 'if only someone holds me up can't I deal with the thieves!'"

16th May 1947

(40) THE *SHAKTI* THAT IS, IS ONE

Like the young man of yesterday, a North Indian gentleman handed over to Bhagavan a letter full of questions, chief amongst them being why Bhagavan does not try to improve the welfare of the world. After reading it Bhagavan said, looking at those near, "Yesterday also we had the same type of question. It is enough if all these people who preach about working for the welfare of the world, first work for their own welfare. Unable to enquire who they are and know that, they think of reforming the world. They must first find out who it is that is thinking thus. They don't do that. And they say, they will reform the world. It is just like the story of the lame man."

That questioner said, "Swami, how can *jnānis* like you sit quiet without moving? When there is strife and turmoil in the world, should you not help in establishing peace?" Bhagavan replied, "Yes, but how do you know that *jnānis* are not rendering any help? Their remaining where they are is itself a help to the world. To all outward appearances they seem to be doing nothing. Supposing there is a wealthy man. In his dream he goes about begging, works as a cooly and sweeps the streets. When he wakes up, he realises that he is not that sort of person and remains dignified in the thought that he is a wealthy man. In the same manner, a *jnāni* may do anything according to his *prārabdha* (fate) but he remains unattached and maintains a dignified aloofness. His *shakti* works in many ways but he does not feel happy or unhappy over the success or failure of his efforts. That is because he sees the world

as full of Brahman and so nothing appears to him to be happy or unhappy. How can he have feelings of gratification or sorrow when he does not feel that he is in this body, that he is in this man or that this is the world? According to what is said in the Upanishads '*dristim jñānamayeem kritvā paśyeth Brahmanamayam jagath*', when a person gains the outlook of a *jñāni* that very moment everything appears to be full of Brahman. Where then is room for the feeling 'I am doing'? They will then realise that everything is going on through some *shakti*. That is all," said Bhagavan.

Another person said, "*Jñānis* are said to be capable of cursing and giving boons. You are saying that they have nothing to do. How is it?" Bhagavan replied, "Yes. Who said they are not capable? But they do not have the feeling that they are one thing and the *shakti* or Iswara is another. The force, that is, is only one. They realise that they are moving because of that *shakti* and keep themselves from the feeling that they are the doers. Their presence itself is of use to the world. They do whatever acts they have to in accordance with their *prārabdha*. That is all."

17th May 1947

(41) PRĀRABDHA (FATE)

This morning at 9 o'clock one devotee addressed Bhagavan as follows: "Swami, you said yesterday that a *jñāni* will perform such actions as are ordained according to his *prārabdha*. But it is said that *jñānis* have no *prārabdha* at all!"

Bhagavan said, in a leisurely way, "How did they get this body if they have no *prārabdha*? How do they perform the various actions? The actions of *jñānis* are themselves called *prārabdhas*. It is stated that there is *prārabdha* from Brahma right up to Sadasiva and the Avatars of Rama and Krishna and others also.

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ।

"For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the sake of firmly establishing *dharma* (righteousness), I am born from age to age."

—The Bhagavad Gita, IV. 8.

As stated in this *sloka*, Iswara assumes a shape when the virtue of good people and the sins of bad people mingle and become *prārabdha* and he has to establish *Dharma*. That is called *parechcha prārabdha* (the acts of other people). The body itself is *prārabdha*. The purpose for which that body has come into existence will get done of its own accord."

The questioner of yesterday said, "In the Gita, Karma Yoga has been given greater prominence." "Oho! Is that so? Karma Yoga is not the only one. What about the others? If you understand them all, you will know the real secret of Karma Yoga; only you don't do that," said Bhagavan.

अहं क्रतुरहं यज्ञः स्वधाऽहमहमौषधम् ।
मन्त्रोऽहमहमेवाऽज्यमहमग्निरहं हुतम् ।

—The Gita, IX. 16.

"I am the oblation, I am the sacrifice, I the offering, the fire-giving herb, the *mantram*; also the clarified butter, the fire, and the burnt-offering."

Before saying this, Lord Krishna in the Gita has said :

न च मां तानि कर्माणि निबद्धान्ति धनञ्जय ।

उदासीनवदासीनसक्तं तेषु कर्मसु ॥ (IX: 9)

“Nor do these works bind me, O Dhananjaya, enthroned on high, unattached to actions.”

Besides this :

उदासीनवदासीनो गुणैर्यो न विचाल्यते ।

गुणा वर्तन्त इत्येव योऽवतिष्ठति नेङ्गते ॥ (XIV: 23)

“He who, seated as a neutral, is unshaken by the qualities (*gunās*) who stands apart immovable saying, ‘the *gunās* revolve’.”

And :

समदुःखसुखः स्वस्थः समलोप्याश्मकांचनः ।

तुल्यप्रियाप्रियो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः ॥ (XIV: 24)

“Balanced in pleasure and pain, self-reliant, to whom a lump of earth, rock, and gold are alike, the same to loved and unloved, firm, the same in censure and in praise.”

And again :

मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः ।

सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते ॥ (XIV: 25)

“The same in honour and dishonour, the same to friend and foe, abandoning all undertakings, — he is said to have crossed over the qualities’ (*gunās*).”

“That is what has been stated. The *Mahāpurushās* (great personages) mentioned above, are realised souls. Whatever outward shape they may have, *sisya* (disciple),

bhakta (devotee), *udāseena* (the unconcerned) and *pāpātma* (sinner), all the people in these four categories are protected through the grace of the *jnānis*. The *sishyās* worship them as gurus, ascertain the truth and attain *mukti* (freedom from bondage). *Bhaktas* pray to them as the *swarūpa* (form) of God and get release from their sins. *Udāseenas* listen to what the Guru says, get enthused and become devotees. Sinners hear the stories from people that come and go and get release from their sins. People in these four categories are protected by the grace of *jnānis*," said Bhagavan.

Someone said, "You said that bad people will be released from their sins. Is that by listening to what others say or by talking amongst themselves?" "It is by hearing what others say. They are sinners, aren't they? How will they talk about good people?" said Bhagavan. Yesterday's questioner asked, "You said sinners will get released. Does that mean from their bodily or mental ailments?" "It is for the mind only," Bhagavan replied; "happiness is possible only if the mind is right. If the mind is not right, whatever else may be, there is no peace. The mind becomes ripe according to each person's fitness. A *nāstik* (an agnostic) becomes an *āstik* (a believer), an *āstik* becomes a *bhakta*, a *bhakta* becomes a *jignāsu* (one desirous of Knowledge) and a *jignāsu* becomes a *jnāni*. This refers to the mind only. What is the use of saying it refers to the body? If the mind is happy, not only the body but the whole world will be happy. So one must find out the way of becoming happy oneself. One cannot do this except by finding out about oneself by self-enquiry. To think of reforming the world without doing that is like thinking of covering the whole world with leather to avoid

the pain caused by walking on stones and thorns when the much simpler method of wearing leather shoes is available. When by holding an umbrella over your head you can avoid the sun, will it be possible to cover the face of the whole earth by tying a cloth over it to avoid the sun? If a person realises his position and stays in his own self, things that are to happen will happen. Things that are not to happen will not happen. The *shakti* that is in the world, is only one. All these troubles arise if we think that we are separate from that *shakti*."

18th May 1947

(42) SEEING A LION IN A DREAM

This afternoon, at 3 o'clock, another series of questions started again. "Brahman is said to be *Sat-Chit-Ananda svarūpa*. What does that mean?" said one. "Yes. That is so," Bhagavan replied, "That which is, is only *Sat*. That is called Brahman. The lustre of that *Sat* is *Chit* and its nature is *Ananda*. These are not different from *Sat*. All the three together are known as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. It is the same in regard to the attributes of the *jiva* — *satvam*, *ghoram* and *jīdam*. *Ghoram* means the quality of *rajas*, and *jādam* means the quality of *taṃas*. Both these are parts of *Satvam*. If these two are removed, what remains is only *Satvam*. That is the truth which is eternal and pure. Call it Atman, Brahman, Shakti or anything you like. If you know that that is yourself, everything is lustrous. Everything is *Ananda*."

That questioner said, "The ancients say that for a person who wants to know that real state *sādhana*, *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* are absolutely necessary till the very end." Bhagavan replied, "They are necessary only to get rid of the various things that come from outside and that too for purposes of *sādhana* only, but not for realising the Self. One's own self is there at all times and in all places. *Śravaṇa* etc. are to be resorted to only to get rid of external influences but if they are regarded as the most important things they will be the cause of the development of the feelings of *ahankāra* such as 'I am a pandit' (learned man), 'I am a great man' and the like. That is a big *samsāra* (family). It is difficult to get rid of it later on. It is bigger than a wild elephant. It will not yield ordinarily."

"For that wild elephant, it is said that *Guru Katāksham* (the Grace of the Guru) is like seeing a lion in its dream," said the questioner. "That is true. If an elephant sees a lion in its dream, it wakes up startled and will not sleep again that day for fear that the lion might appear again in a dream. In the same way in a man's life which is also akin to a dream, it is not *Guru katāksham* alone, but also *śravaṇa*, *manana*, *nididhyāsa* etc., that are akin to the sign of a lion in a dream. As they go on getting these dreams they wake up, and again go to bed and by efflux of time they may some day get a lion's dream called *Guru kaṭāksham* in an intense manner. They get startled and obtain *jñāna*. Then there will be no more dreams and they will not only be wakeful at all times but will not give room for any dreams of life but will remain alert until that true and real knowledge is obtained. These lion's dreams are unavoidable and must be experienced," said Bhagavan.

With some surprise, that questioner said, "Are *sravana* etc. and *Guru katāksha* akin to dreams?" "Yes, that is so. For those who realise the truth, everything is akin to a dream. What do you now say is the truth? During sleep you have no control over this body. You wander about in various places with various bodies. You do all sorts of things. At that time everything appears real. You do everything as if you are the doer. It is only after you wake up that you feel that you are a Venkiah or a Pulliah, that what you had experienced in the dream is unreal and that it was only a dream. Not only that. Sometimes you go to bed after eating your fill late at night — sweets such as *laddu* and *jilebi*. During sleep you dream that you are wandering in all sorts of places, cannot get food and are about to die of starvation. When you get up startled, you will be belching. Then you will realise that the whole thing was a dream. But during that sleep, did you remember about this (your over-eating)? Another person goes to bed suffering from starvation. In his dream, he enjoys a feast, eating *laddu* and *jilebi*. Will he remember at that time the fact that he had gone to bed hungry? No, he wakes up and finds himself terribly hungry. 'Oh God! It is all illusion, a mere dream,' he thinks. That is all. You were existent in the wakeful state as well as in the dream state and also in the sleeping state. When you are able to understand your state which had been existent all the time, you will then understand that all the rest is like a dream. When that is known, the feeling that the Guru is different from you will disappear. But then, since this realisation must come about because of *Guru katāksha*, that *Guru katāksha* is likened to a dream of a lion. That dream must be intense and must imprint itself on one's

mind. It is only then that a proper wakefulness will come about. For that, the time must be propitious. If *sādhana* is performed relentlessly, some time or other favourable results will turn up. That is all." So saying, Bhagavan assumed a dignified silence.

The clock struck four. The people in the hall who were completely absorbed in this spiritual discourse of Bhagavan, came back to their own consciousness. The voice of Bhagavan was ringing in my ears. I returned, wondering whether at any time in this life I would get that lion's dream of *Guru kalāksha* and get it imprinted on me.

19th May 1947

(43) WHERE IS THE KING AND WHERE IS THE KINGDOM?

This afternoon, during a conversation regarding old *Sankara Vijayam*, Bhagavan asked one devotee whether it was not a fact that amongst all books on the Life of Sankara, *Sankara Vijayam* of Vidyaranya was the best. "He was a great scholar and so his book is taken as an authority by all," said that devotee. Bhagavan said, with a smile, "Yes, his mental powers were very great. He was a great votary of *Sri Vidya*, you see. He therefore wanted to create a city in the shape of *Sri Chakra* (wheel) and started doing it in Hampi but was disappointed. So he said that an emperor in future would rule the country and would be able to build a city in the shape of a *Sri Chakra*. When I told Nāyanā about this while I was on the hill, he made a peculiar commentary, namely: '*Sri Chakrākṛiti Sona*

Saila Vapusham, Sri Shodasārnātmakam occurs in *Arunachala Ashtaka Stotram*, written by Sri Sankara. Besides this, in *Arunachala Purāna*, it is stated that this hill is reputed to be in the shape of *Sri Chakra*. Hence, without searching for it, we have been lucky in getting this place which is in the shape of *Sri Chakra*. Bhagavan is the *Chakravarthi* (Emperor). If about ten houses are built around the hill, this itself is a great empire. Sankara must have intended this only,' so said Nāyanā. He followed it up by arranging the whole administrative set up by saying, 'Here is the Commander-in-chief, that man is the Treasurer, he is this, he is that.' It used to be very amusing when he was here. All used to sit together and say, 'What are the refreshments today for our Durbar?' Then they used to draw up a programme, cook, and eat. They used to conduct the programme as if they were ruling an empire. This Sundaresan and that Kalyanam, were they like this then? Oh! Each person used to be highly active and hilarious. They used to think that they were great warriors," said Bhagavan.

"When was all that?" asked Sivanandam. "That was while we were in Virupaksha Cave. Some times Nāyanā actually drew up a plan on paper for the city to be built. A special place was allotted for me in that plan. Afterwards he used to draw up plans suitable for the administration of the empire. No King. No kingdom. Plans, however, were got ready. Many plans were prepared like that. Where was the king? Where was the kingdom?" asked Bhagavan. Subba Rao, a disciple of Nāyanā, said, "Why, was there no king? He is just opposite to us. Only this king wears a loin cloth. That is all. What is wanting? Haven't houses been built around the hill? Isn't the place

where Bhagavan sits, like a king's palace? The whole administration here is going on like a king's household. Only there is some difference between an ordinary kingdom and this. That is all."

"That is all right. Nāyanā also used to say that the position of a Maharaja and a *Mahājñāni* is the same. When astrologers predicted that Tathagatha (Buddha) would become either an Emperor or a sanyasi, full of wisdom and knowledge, his father prevented him from going out anywhere, kept him in the palace and tried his best to interest him in the pleasures and luxuries of the palace. At last when he (Buddha) somehow managed to go out on some pretext, he saw all the sufferings of people in the world. So, he ran away and took sanyasa. One of the two empires, material, or spiritual," said Bhagavan.

21st May 1947

(44) *NIDIDHYĀSANA* (INTENSE
CONCENTRATION)

Yesterday morning at 8 o'clock, Dr. Syed who is a worker for Arya Vignana Sangha and one of the disciples of Bhagavan, came here for Bhagavan's *darshan* and asked, "Bhagavan says the whole world is the *svarūpa* of Atma. If so, why do we find so many troubles in this world?"

With a face indicating pleasure, Bhagavan replied, "That is called Maya. In *Vedānta Chintāmaṇi*, that Maya has been described in five ways. One by name Nijaguna Yogi wrote that book in Canarese. Vedanta has been so well dealt with in it, it can be said to be an authority on

the Vedanta language. There is a Tamil translation. The five names of Maya are *Tamas*, *Maya*, *Moham*, *Avidya* and *Anitya*. *Tamas* is that which hides the knowledge of life. *Maya* is that which is responsible for making one who is the form of the world appear different from it. *Moha* is that which makes such a different one look real: *sukti rajata bhrān̄thi* — creating an illusion that mother-of-pearl is made of silver. *Avidya* is that which spoils *Vidya* (learning). *Anitya* is transient, that which is different from what is permanent and the real. On account of these five *Mayas* troubles appear in the Atma like the cinema pictures on the screen. Only to remove this *Maya* it is said that the whole world is *mithya* (unreal). Atman is like the screen. Just as you come to know that the pictures that are shown are dependent on the screen and do not exist otherwise, so also, until one is able to know by self-enquiry that the world that is visible is not different from Atma, it has to be said that this is all *mithya*. But once the reality is known, the whole universe will appear as Atma only. Hence the very people who said the world is unreal, have subsequently said that it is only Atma *swarūpa*. After all, it is the outlook that is important. If the outlook changes, the troubles of the world will not worry us. Are the waves different from the ocean? Why do the waves occur at all? If asked, what reply can we give? The troubles in the world also are like that. Waves come and go. If it is found out that they are not different from Atma this worry will not exist."

That devotee said in a plaintive tone, "However often Bhagavan teaches us, we are not able to understand." "People say that they are not able to know the Atma that is all-pervading. What can I do? Even the smallest child

says, 'I exist. I do ; and this is mine'. So, everyone understands that the thing 'I' is always existent. It is only when that 'I' is there, the feeling is there that you are the body, he is Venkanna, this is Ramanna and the like. To know that the one that is always visible is one's own self, is it necessary to search with a candle? To say that we do not know the Atma *swarūpa* which is not different but which is in one's own self is like saying 'I do not know myself'," said Bhagavan.

"That means that those who by *śravaṇa* (hearing) and *manana* (repeating within oneself) become enlightened and look upon the whole visible world as full of Maya, will ultimately find the real *swarūpa* by *nididhyāsana*," said the devotee.

"Yes, that is it. *Nidi* means *swarūpa* ; *nididhyāsana* is the act of intensely concentrating on the *swarūpa* with the help of *śravaṇa* and *manana* of the words of the Guru. That means to meditate on that with undeflected zeal. After meditating for a long time, he merges in it. Then it shines as itself. That is always there. There will be no troubles of this sort if one can see the thing as it is. Why so many questions to see one's own self that is always there?" said Bhagavan.

23rd May 1947

(45) *AJAPA TATVAM* (THE MEANING
OF INVOLUNTARY *JAPAM*)

This morning at 8 o'clock, an ochre-robed person asked, "Swami, for controlling the mind, which of the two is better, performing *japa* of the *ajapa mantra* or of *Omkar*? Please tell me which is more useful?" Bhagavan replied as follows: "What is your idea of *ajapa*? Will it be *ajapa* if you go on repeating with the mouth '*soham*' '*soham*'? *Ajapa* means to know that *japa* which goes on involuntarily without being uttered through the mouth. Without knowing the real meaning of that *japa*, people think that it means repeating with the mouth the words '*soham*' '*soham*' lakhs of times counting them on the fingers or on a string of beads. Before beginning of a *japa* '*prānāyāme viniyogah*' is prescribed. That means, first do *prānāyāma* (regulating of breath) and then begin repeating the mantra. *Prānāyāma* means first closing the mouth, doesn't it? If, by stopping the breath, the five elements in the body are bound down and controlled what remains is the real Self. That Self will by itself be repeating always '*aham aham*'. That is *ajapa*. To know that aspect is '*ajapa*'; how could that which is repeated by mouth be *ajapa*? The vision of the real Self which performs *japa* of its own accord involuntarily and in a never ending stream like the flowing down continuously of ghee is *ajapa*, *Gāyatri* and everything. At the time of the *upanāyanam* itself, *prānāyāma* is taught by *anganyāsa*, *karanyāsa* and other methods of stopping the breathing and people are asked to understand that *ajapa* by practice with suitable accompaniments. Without thinking of it, people

talk of *ajapa*. It is the same thing in regard to *Omkar*. *Om* is all-pervading and complete by itself. How can one do *japa* of that word with the voice? The *sutra* is always there : ‘*Omityekāksharam Brahma Adviteeyam Sanātanam.*’ Without understanding that elementary thing, big books have been written stating the number of times each name should be repeated, such as so many thousands for Ganapathi in *Mooladhara* and for other *chakras*, so many thousands for Brahma, so many for Vishnu and Sadasiva. If you know who it is that is doing *japa* you will know what the *japa* is. If you search and try to find out who it is that is doing *japa*, that *japa* itself becomes the Self.”

Another person asked, “Is there no benefit at all in doing *japa* with the mouth?” “Who said no? That will be the means for *chitta suddhi* (purifying the mind). As the *japa* is done repeatedly the effort ripens and sooner or later leads to the right path. Good or bad, whatever is done, never goes to waste. Only the differences and the merits and demerits of each will have to be told, looking to the stage of development of the person concerned,” said Bhagavan. His *Upadesa Saram* itself is an authority on the subject.

28th May 1947

(46) WHY ANY SECRECY?

Often it happens that in Bhagavan's presence, fruits and sweets are brought and placed before him ; sometimes they are served on his leaf while taking food and at times

they are brought into the hall and Bhagavan is asked to eat them in the presence of all the people there. It is all right if they are new people but if they are old devotees Bhagavan would remark : "What more is there to do ? *Naivedya* is over. Perhaps camphor also will be burnt ? " or "Will *swāmitvaśn* (the role of a Swami) be lost unless I eat whenever asked and do as requested ? " If they are Asramites, he would even administer a mild rebuke, saying "Why all this, instead of looking to the purpose for which you came ? " It is, I believe, a year back, that one morning I brought fried jowar at the breakfast time, gave it to the people in charge of the kitchen and said nothing. What of that ? As soon as I went to the hall Bhagavan complained, "I have eaten all sorts of foodgrains. Why do you take all this work on yourself ? " From that time onwards, I have not been giving the Asramam anything prepared at home. Recently when you sent figs and other fruit, I gave them to Bhagavan's attendants secretly as I was afraid of what Bhagavan would say if I gave them in the presence of all the people. They waited for a suitable opportunity and gave them to Bhagavan. He did not say anything at the time, but you know what happened four or five days later ? I went to the Asramam in the afternoon at 2-30. There was no one else with Bhagavan except the attendants. Squirrels were scrambling about the sofa and indirectly demanding their food. Bhagavan was emptying the tin and was saying "Sorry, nothing in it," and turning towards me, he said, "The cashewnuts are finished. They do not like groundnuts. What am I to do ? " I looked at the attendants enquiringly. They said that there were no cashewnuts even in the store-room. The squirrels did not stop their fuss. I had to do something. At the same time

I was afraid what Bhagavan would say if I got some from the bazar.

In the evening when someone was going to town, I gave him money to bring 10 palams of cashewnuts. The person who brought them did not give them to me immediately but gave them next morning at 9 o'clock. Afraid of what Bhagavan would say if I gave them in his presence, I gave the packet to the attendant, Krishnaswamy, after Bhagavan had gone out at 9-45 a.m. I do not know what happened in the room. I went to the Asramam at 2-30 p.m. and stayed on till 4. This topic never came up. I felt greatly relieved, went home, came back in the evening at 6 and sat in the hall at a distance. *Vedapārāyana* was over. Krishnaswamy was pouring into a tin the cashewnuts I gave him. Bhagavan saw and asked him who gave them. He said 'Nagamma'. "When?" asked Bhagavan. "At 9-45 a.m. when Bhagavan went out," said the attendant.

"Is that so? Why not give it in my presence? Why this secrecy? Because, I suppose she was afraid Bhagavan would be angry. These pranks have not been given up yet. Perhaps it is at her instance that Subbulakshmi brought cashewnuts a short while back and gave them secretly to Satyananda through the window and slipped out. In addition, she gave an excuse to the effect that Athai (Bhagavan's sister) had asked them to be given. She put it on to Athai as she thought I would not say anything in that event. These are the silly acts of people here. Why do they indulge in these things instead of confining themselves to the purpose for which they have come here? They try to hoodwink Swami. They do not know that they themselves are getting hoodwinked. This weakness has not left them

in spite of years, of stay here. Have they come here for this purpose?" said Bhagavan in a thundering voice.

As I sat there, I felt I had become a statue. I never told Subbulakshmamma nor did I know of her giving the cashewnuts. But I could not even open my mouth to point out the facts. By these words, I was reminded of the purpose for which I had come. I thought that the lion's dream known as *Guru katāksha* is like this. The clock struck once. Startled by it, I looked at it and found it was 6-30 p.m. As that is the hour at which ladies have to leave the Asramam, all of them were slowly going away. I got up somehow and bowed before Bhagavan. He was looking at me with piercing eyes indicating anger coupled with sympathy. I could not look at that majestic personality, and so without raising my head that I had bent with shame, I came home and went to sleep. It was broad daylight by the time I woke up. I realised that the reason for the rebuke, which was like a precept, was not merely the cashewnut but my forgetfulness of the purpose for which I had come to the Asramam, namely the acquiring of *Jnāna*. There must be many instances of such forgetfulness and so I prayed to Bhagavan in my mind to forgive me.

I got up before sunrise, finished my morning routine quickly and went to the Asramam. No sooner did I step into the hall than Bhagavan, with a face radiant with smiles, brought up my case for enquiry. It became clear that I never told Subbulakshmamma, and that Alamelu Athai herself sent those nuts through Subbulakshmamma for the squirrels as they were left over after the *Sashtiabdhapurthi* (completion of 60th year) celebrations of her husband. "Is that so! The story has now taken a different turn. Even so, why the secrecy? Anyway, let that go. It is all

over now." So saying Bhagavan changed the topic and tried to cover up the whole incident by consoling words. But I have not been able to forget it even now :

आशया बध्यते लोको कर्मणा बहु चिंतया ।

आयुःक्षीणं न जानाति तस्मात् जाग्रत जाग्रत ।

"Men are bound down by desire, activity and much worry ; they do not realize the shortening of life-span. Hence awake !"

These words of the ancients are worth remembering. So far as I am concerned, the words that Bhagavan spoke, the looks that he cast with a feeling that this child, without realising how fast time flies, was wasting her time on trivialities, were imprinted on my heart. Brother, how can I write the full implications of that incident ! After all, Bhagavan is a *Jnānadāthā* (Giver of *Jnāna*) !

5th June 1947

(47) KRITI SAMARPANA — DEDICATION OF A BOOK

After leaving your house in Madras the day before yesterday night, I reached the Asramam yesterday morning by 7 o'clock. Though it was only four days since I had left the Asramam, I felt as if it was four centuries. So I went straight to the Asramam from the Railway Station. Bhagavan was taking his breakfast. When I prostrated before him and stood up, he said, "You have come back ? So soon ?" I said "Yes" and told him that 10 copies of

'*Lekhalu*' were ready, that I had brought them with me and that the printers said that they would send the remaining copies to the Asramam direct. Bhagavan said "Yes," and remained indifferent.

After finishing my bath etc., I took the bundle of books and went to the Asramam office, but the *Sarvādhi-kāri* was not there. So I thought I could as well show them to Bhagavan and then bring them back and so went into the hall. I did go into the office first in accordance with the rule to give books there, but the desire to show them to Bhagavan first was dormant in my mind. Whatever it be, taking advantage of the absence of the *Sarvādhi-kāri* from the office, I went to the hall first. Bhagavan was reading the paper and appeared not to notice me. Afraid of giving the books into his hands, I placed them on the stool. In dedicating a book, it is usual to honour the person to whom it is dedicated by offering him fruits, flowers and presents according to the author's ability. But you know the proverb : "For a God as big as a mountain, can you offer flower etc., mountain-high?" For this Bhagavan, what is it that we could offer for worship? Even so, if I wanted to offer any of the classical *pūja* articles such as *patram* (sacred green leaves), *pushpam* (flowers), *phalam* (fruits), *thoyam* (water), I was afraid Bhagavan would again scold me as he had done recently. So I merely folded my hands to salute him. You know what a nice thing happened then? As I bent down to prostrate, a devotee came there with a group of Brahmins and with a plate full of flowers, fruits, *agarbathies* (incense sticks), arecanuts, betel-leaves, etc. and placed it by the side of the books. When I got up and saw them, I felt extremely happy at the coincidence. All of them stood in a group and chanted

the vedic hymn beginning with '*nakarmanā naprajayā dhanena*'. After the chanting was over, we all got up after bowing before Bhagavan. Krishnaswamy sent them away after giving *prasādam*. Bhagavan put the paper away and said to me leisurely "Today it is *Sashtiabdhapurthi* for him, it seems." "Is it so?" said I. Whatever it is, I was satisfied that though that I never brought anything, unexpectedly someone else had brought flowers and fruit to make up for the omission.

Krishnaswamy left the books there. So I myself handed them over to Bhagavan. Turning them over this side and that Bhagavan said, "Give them in the office. Let them come to me with the office stamp." I opened a copy and showed Bhagavan that under his photo the press people had forgotten to print the name. "Oh! A mistake has been made. It doesn't matter. The *nāmam* (name) has merged in the *rūpam* (form). Give them to the office," said Bhagavan. I took them and came back after handing them over to Sri Niranjanananda Swamy, the *Sarvādhikāri*. After 9 a.m. Mounaswamy brought two copies of the book and gave them to Bhagavan. Bhagavan saw them and enquiring if one was for him and one for Nagamma, he told a devotee nearby, "Please give the copy to her. She wrote it and her brother got it printed. She herself brought and gave us some copies and from out of them we are giving her a copy. It is just like making an idol of Pillaiar (Lord Ganesa) with jaggery and, after *pūja*, pinching a little of that jaggery and using it for *nāivedyam*. When fruits are brought and given us, do' we not give *prasādam*?"

20th June 1947

(48) *KARATHALA BHIKSHA* — (ALMS
IN THE PALMS)

Four or five days back, a note-book of Madhava-swami's was found. As Bhagavan was looking into it, he saw a Tamil verse in it written by him, long ago. It was in Malayalam script, and while transcribing it into Tamil he told us its meaning: "When a man attains *jnāna*, he will not have any regard for this body. Just as, after taking food, the leaf on which it was taken is thrown away however nice it may be, so also after attaining *jnāna* one will be waiting eagerly for the time when it can be thrown away. This is the essence of what is stated in this verse."

One devotee asked, "For what reason did Bhagavan write this verse?" "In Tamil, in a book called '*Prabhu-lingalila*', the same idea was expressed in a verse of four lines, and so, seeing it I thought it better to write briefly in a smaller verse of two lines," said Bhagavan. He then wrote it in Tamil script and began telling us further as follows: "The symbol of the used leaf has been given by many people. However nicely a leaf-plate is stitched, it is useful only until the meal is over. After that will there be any regard for it? It is immediately thrown away. Rich people have food on silver plates with gold flowers inlaid in them. Why are such things required when we have hands given by God? When I was on the hill someone got a leaf made of silver and requested me to eat from it. I sent it back saying that I did not require it. When the food can be eaten out of the hands, why silver and gold? For a long time I did not eat food from a leaf."

If anybody brought food, I used to stretch out the palms of my hands and when the food was served in my hands I used to eat it. It is only of late that I have begun eating food served in a leaf."

Another person said, "Is it because of that that Ganapathi Muni praised you saying '*Karathāmarasena supātravatā*'?" Bhagavan replied "Yes. When you have hands, why all these things? It used to be an exhilarating experience in those days. When I was going out for *Bhiksha*, I used to take the alms in the palms of my hands and go along the street eating it. When the eating was over I used to go on licking my hands. I never used to care for anything. I used to feel shy to ask anyone for anything. Hence that *karathala bhikshā* (alms in the palms) used to be very interesting. There used to be big pundits this side and that; sometimes big government officials also used to be there. What did I care who was there? It would be humiliating for a poor man to go out for *bhiksha*, but for one who has conquered the ego and become an Advaiti, it is a great elevation of the mind. At that time, he would not care if an Emperor came there. In that way, when I went out for *bhiksha* and clapped my hands, people used to say 'Swami is come', and give me *bhiksha* with fear and devotion. Those who did not know me used to say, 'You are strong and sturdy. Instead of going out like this as a beggar, why don't you go out to work as a cooly?' I used to feel amused. But I was a Mouna Swami and did not speak. So I used to laugh and go away feeling that it was usual for ordinary people to talk like that. The more they talked like that the more exhilarated I felt. That was great fun."

"In *Vāsishtam*, there is a story about Bhagiratha before he brought Ganges down to the earth. He was an

Emperor but the empire seemed to him a great burden because of *Atmajignasa* (Self-enquiry). In accordance with the advice of his Guru and on the pretext of a *Yagna* (sacrifice), he gave away all his wealth and other possessions. No one would, however, take the empire. So he invited the neighbouring King who was an enemy and who was waiting for a suitable opportunity and gifted away the empire to him. The only thing that remained to be done was to leave the country. He left at midnight in disguise, lay in hiding during day time in other countries so as not to be recognised and went about begging alms at night. Ultimately he felt confident that his mind had matured sufficiently to be free from egoism. Then he decided to go to his native place and there went out begging in all the streets. As he was not recognised by anybody, he went one day to the palace itself. The watchman recognised him, made obeisance and informed the then King about it, shivering with fear. The King came in a great hurry and requested him (Bhagiratha) to accept the kingdom back, but Bhagiratha did not agree. "Will you give me alms or not?" he asked. As there was no other alternative, they gave him alms and he went away highly pleased. Subsequently he became the King of some other country for some reason and when the King of his own country passed away, he ruled that country also at the special request of the people. That story is given in detail in *Vāsishtam*. The kingdom which earlier appeared to him to be a burden did not trouble him later when he became a *Jnani*. All that I want to say is, how do others know about the happiness of *bhiksha*? There is nothing great about begging or eating food from a leaf which has been thrown out after taking food from it. If an Emperor goes out begging, there is

greatness in that *bhiksha*. But is there any greatness in present day *bhikshas*? Now, *bhiksha* here means that you must have *vada* and *pāyasam* (pudding). In some months, there will be many more such things. Even for *pādapuja* (worshipping of the feet) money is demanded. Unless the stipulated money is tendered beforehand, they refuse to take *oupāsanam* (a spoonful of water taken with a prayer before beginning to take food). The unique significance of *Karathala Bhiksha* has now degenerated to this extent," said Bhagavan.

मूलं तरोः केवलमाश्रयन्तः ।

पाणिद्वयं भोक्तुमभ्यन्यन्तः ।

कन्थामिव श्रीमपि कुत्सयन्तः ।

कौपीनवन्तः खलु भाग्यवन्तः ।

"Living only under trees, eating food out of their palms, disregarding even the Goddess of Wealth like an old rag, fortunate indeed are those dressed in a cod-piece."

21st June 1947

(49) UPANAYANAM (CEREMONY OF THE SACRED THREAD)

One morning two or three days back some people came with a young boy whose *Upanayanam* was recently performed and went away after prostrating before Bhagavan. Soon after they left, some devotee asked him about the significance of *Upanayanam* and Bhagavan related it to us as follows :

"*Upanayanam* does not mean just putting round the neck three rows of yarn. It means that there are not only two eyes but a third also. That is the *jñāna netram* (wisdom-eye). Open that eye and recognise your *swa-swarūpa* (own form); that is what is taught. *Upanayanam* means additional eye. They say that that eye must be opened and for that purpose they give training in *Prāṇāyāmam* (breath control). After that they give *Brahmopadesam* (Initiating about Brahman), give the boy a begging bowl and tell him to go about begging. The first *bhiksha* is *māthru* (mother's). When the father gives *Brahmopadesam*, the mother gives three handfuls of *bhiksha* (rice) to enable the young boy to do *manana* (repeat inwardly), the *upadesa* given by the father. He is expected to fill his belly by begging, stay in the Guru's house for training and realise his self by opening the *Jñāna netram*. That is the significance of *Upanayanam*. Forgetting all that, what is done at present is this : *Prāṇāyāmam* has come to mean just closing the nose with the fingers and pretending to control the breath. *Brahmopadesam* means just to cover both the father and the son with a new dhoti and the father whispers something in the ear of the son. *Bhiksha* means just filling up the begging bowl with money. What could they preach to the boy when the father who gives the *Upadesa* and the priest who gets this done, do not know the real significance of *Upanayanam*? Not only that. After receiving the required knowledge by staying with the Guru for a sufficiently long time, the Guru used to send the boy to his parents to find out whether his mind would get caught in worldly affairs or not. After staying for some time in their own homes, the boys used to start on a pilgrimage to Banaras, devoid of worldly

desires and with a view to renouncing them completely. At that time, parents having marriageable girls dissuade the boys from going to Banaras and offer them daughters in marriage. Those that are strongly inclined towards renunciation would go without caring for the offers of marriage and those that are otherwise, return and accept the offer of marriage. All that is forgotten now. Pilgrimage to Banaras at present means the young man puts on a silver-lined silk dhoti, his eyes are coloured black, his forehead bears a caste mark, his feet are ornamented with yellow and red paste, his body is smeared with sandal-paste, his neck is adorned with flower garlands, an umbrella is spread over his head and wooden sandals are worn for his feet and he walks on stylishly to the accompaniment of music. When the girl's brother comes and offers his sister in marriage and presses him to accept the offer, he says, "I want a wrist watch. I want a motor cycle. I want this and I want that. If you give them, I can ; otherwise not." Afraid that the marriage which is arranged may fall through, the parents of the bride give whatever is demanded. Then they have photos, feasts and presentations of cloths and the like. Now-a-days, *bhikshas* are used for filling up the begging bowl with rupees and pilgrimages to Banaras are used for extracting dowries."

27th June 1947

(50) FORCED DINNERS

This afternoon at 3 o'clock, a devotee from Eesānya Mutt came and bowed before Bhagavan. Seeing him, Bhagavan said, "A telegram has been received that the Swami in Kovilur Mutt is no more. Is Natesa Swami gone?" "Yes. Two days ago. We knew beforehand that he was sick," he said. Someone asked "Who is Natesa Swami?" "The deceased who passed away at the Kovilur Mutt was originally in charge of the Eesānya Mutt. When the *Matadhipathi* (head of the Mutt) of Kovilur passed away Natesa Swami was taken there and was made the head of that Mutt. That is the most important Vedanta Mutt this side. Though he was not very learned, he was a good *sādhak* and so he was chosen. It might be about 20 years back," said Bhagavan.

"Is he the same person that made Bhagavan get into a bandy?" I asked. "No. That was the one who was in the Mutt before Natesa Swami. He was not like this person. He was a powerful personality," said Bhagavan. "When was that?" someone asked. "That was when I was still in Virupaksha Cave. About four or five years after I came to Tiruvannamalai. It is a funny story. One day when Palaniswami and myself went round the hill and came near the temple it was 8 p.m. As we were tired, I lay down in Subrahmanya temple. Palani went out to fetch food from the choultry. He (the head of the Mutt) was going into the temple. As usual there were a number of his disciples around him. One of them saw me and told them about it. That was enough. While returning, he came with ten of

his disciples and stood around me. He began saying, 'Get up, Swami. We shall go.' I was a Mouna Swami then, so I showed by signs that I wouldn't accompany them. Was he the man to listen to me? 'Lift him up bodily, lift,' he said to his disciples. As there was no alternative, I got up. When I came out, there was a bandy ready. 'Get in, Swami,' he said. I declined and showed them by signs that I would prefer to walk and suggested that he should get into the bandy. He took no notice of my protestations. Instead, he told his disciples, 'What are you looking at? Lift Swami and put him in the cart.' There were ten of them and there was no one on my side. What could I do? They lifted me bodily and put me into the cart. Without saying anything more, I went to the Mutt. He had a big leaf spread out for me, filled it with food of all kinds, showed great respect and began saying 'Please stay here only.' Palaniswami went to the temple, enquired about me and then came to the Mutt. After he came, I somehow managed to escape from there. That was the only occasion on which I got into a cart after coming to Tiruvannamalai. Subsequently whenever new people arrived they sent a cart, asking me to go over to their place. If once I yielded, I was afraid, there would be no end to that sort of invitation and so I sent back the cart, refusing to go. Eventually they stopped sending carts. But that was not the only trouble with them. Even if I did not go to them when invited, I used to go round the hill, when sometimes I used to visit the Mutt. He would then go in and say something to the cook. At meal time he would have a big leaf spread out for me, sit by my side and instruct the cook to serve me food over and over again. On other days he would not eat along with the disciples in the Mutt, but when I

visited the Mutt he used to sit by my side for food. How could I eat all that was piled on the leaf? I used to touch a little of the various preparations. The balance used to be mixed together by the disciples and the inmates used to eat it saying, 'It is Swami's *prasādam*.' Noticing that on two or three occasions, I gave up eating from a leaf. Whenever I felt like eating there in the Mutt, I used to stay in Pachiammankoil or elsewhere nearabouts, go to the Mutt soon after the *naivedya* bell was rung, stay near the main entrance and ask for the *nivedana* (food offered to God). They used to bring it, and give it into my hands. I used to eat without the aid of a leaf. Salt is not put into that *nivedana*, as it is a Siva temple. Even so, I didn't mind it at all. All that I wanted was to satisfy my hunger. As the head of the Mutt was staying upstairs, he knew nothing about it for some time. One day he saw it unexpectedly. 'Who is it that is giving Swami food without salt?' he enquired angrily. Subsequently he learned all the facts and left the matter as it was. The person who died recently is not like that. A very peaceful and easy-going man. He used to sit by my side along with all the others and arrange for serving me food in normal quantities, similar to the others."

"Bhagavan also once lectured there, didn't he?" someone asked. "Yes" he replied. "When the person who recently passed away was teaching some lessons to the inmates of the Mutt, I happened to go there. They received me with great respect and made me sit down. 'Go on with the lessons,' I said. 'Can I teach lessons in Swami's presence? Swami himself must say something,' he replied. So saying, he got a copy of *Gita Sāram*, made his *sishyās*

to read and requested me to explain it. As there was no way out, I gave a discourse."

"Ramachandra Iyer's grandfather once took Bhagavan to his place, it seems," said that questioner. "That was long back, perhaps in 1896. I was then at Gopura Subrahmanyeswara temple. He used to come to me daily, sit for a while and then go. I was in *Mouna*. So there was no talk or consultation. Even then he had great devotion. One day it seems he invited some one to his house for a feast. In the noon, before food, he came to me with another person. Standing one on either side they said, 'Swami, get up. Let us go.' 'Why?' I enquired by signs. They told me the purpose. I refused. But would they go? They caught hold of my hands and forcibly pulled me up. They were prepared even to carry me in their arms. He was tall, stout and with a big belly. I was at the time lean and weak. I was nothing before him. His friend was even sturdier. What could I do? I was afraid they might even carry me in their arms if I resisted any further. I knew they were inviting me with great *bhakti*. So, thinking it was no use arguing with them I walked there. From the main entrance they took me into the hall with great honour, spread a big plantain leaf and fed me sumptuously and then sent me back. That is the only family house here where I have eaten in a leaf."

28th June 1947

(51) QUESTIONS WITH HALF KNOWLEDGE

A few days back a meeting of the Vysya Sangam was held in this town. A number of prominent Vysyas from Andhra State attended it. Two days back all of them came to the Asramam in the morning and one of the chief men amongst them addressed Bhagavan thus : "Swami, God has become *jiva*. Will the grief that the *jiva* suffers affect God or not ?"

Bhagavan did not give a reply immediately but remained silent. The questioner waited for a while and asked, "Swami, shall I wait until you give me a reply ?" "Who is it that is asking the question ?" said Bhagavan. "A *jiva*", he said. "Who is that *jiva* ? What does he look like ? Where was he born ? Where does he get dissolved ? If you enquire and find out, he who is known as *jiva* will be found to be God himself. Then it will be known whether the grief experienced by the *jiva* will affect God or not. When that is known, there will be no trouble at all." "It is that that we are unable to know," said the questioner. "There is no effort required to know one's self. You exist during sleep but all the things in the world that you see are not visible then. When you wake up you see everything. But you existed then and now also (during sleep and while awake). That which comes on you in your wakeful state should be thrown out," said Bhagavan. "How are we to throw it out ?" enquired the other. "If you remain as you are, it will go out of its own accord. Your nature is to be. If you see the Reality as it is, the unreal will go away as unreal," said Bhagavan. "What is

the method by which this can be seen?" asked that questioner. "By enquiring, who I am?" and "what is my true state?" said Bhagavan. "How am I to enquire?" asked that questioner. Bhagavan kept silent.

The questioner waited for a reply for a while and then, saying, "Yes, this is the method" he touched the feet of Bhagavan despite the objections of the attendants and went away with all the members of the Vysya Sangam. After they had left, Bhagavan said to those sitting near him, "Don't they know the reply? They just wanted to test me. They felt that their work was over, when they touched my feet. What more do they require?"

A rich Reddi from Nellore who happened to be there said, "*Ānanda* is said to be *Atma*. *Ānanda* is free from sorrow. If so, when the *jīva* experiences *ānanda*, will he be free from sorrow?" Bhagavan replied, "There can be *ānanda* (joy) only if there is *duhkha* (sorrow). It is only if a thing is known as *duhkha* then *ānanda* can be known. If *duhkha* is not realised, how can *ānanda* be realised? So long as there is one who knows, these two will exist. *Vastu* (the thing that is) is above *sukha* and *duhkha*. Even so, that *vastu* is known as *sukha* because *Sat* is above *Sat* and *Asat*. *Jñāna* is above *Jñāna* and *Ajñāna*, *Vidya* is above *Vidya* and *Avidya*. The same thing is said about several other things. So what is there to say?" said Bhagavan. The same idea is expressed in stanza 10 of "*Unnadhi Nalubadhi*".

30th June 1947

(52) *PŪJA WITH FLOWERS*

Recently a rich lady residing in Ramanathapuram began getting a basket of jasmine flowers from her garden and giving them to all the married ladies in the hall. Bhagavan observed this for four or five days but said nothing. She did not stop that practice. One day she put the flower basket on the stool, bowed before Bhagavan and got up. Bhagavan looking at someone nearby said, "Look! she has brought something. They are flowers perhaps. What for?"

With some fear she said that they were not for Bhagavan but for the married ladies and began distributing them. "Oh! If that is so, they could as well be distributed at their house. Why here? If someone gives flowers thus, all others begin doing the same thing. Seeing that, people who come newly will think that flowers must be distributed and will buy and bring them. Then the trouble starts. I never touch flowers. In some places, it is usual to present flower garlands. So, many people bring flowers. I have not allowed people to do *pūja* to the feet or to the head. Why do we require such practices?" said Bhagavan.

With fear and trepidation she said, "No. I will not bring them any more." Bhagavan said, "All right. That is good," and looking at those still near him, went on as follows: "You know what happened at one of the *Jayanthi* celebrations? A devotee got a book by name '*Pushpānjali*' printed and said he would read it. When I said 'Yes', he stood a little behind and began reading. He appears to have had some flowers hidden in his lap. As the reading

came to a close, bunches of flowers, fell on my legs. On enquiry, it was found that it was his doing. He did it thus because he knew I would not agree if he told me beforehand. What to do? Perhaps in his view it is no *pūja* unless it is done like that."

During the early days of my stay here, on a Varalakshmi *pūja* day, one or two married ladies placed some flowers on Bhagavan's feet, bowed before him and went away after seeking his permission for *pūja*. Next year, all began doing the same thing. Bhagavan looked at them angrily and said, "There it is — one after another, all have started. Why this? This is a result of my keeping quiet instead of stopping it in the very beginning. Enough of this."

Not only in regard to himself but even in regard to *pūja* to the deities Bhagavan mildly rebukes devotees about using leaves and flowers. I have already written to you in one of my previous letters about the *laksha patri pūja* (*pūja* with one lakh of leaves) of Echamma. There is another instance. During the days when Bhagavan used to go round the hill with devotees in stages, they camped one morning at Gowtama Asramam. After the men and women had cooked, eaten and rested, and were getting ready to go so as to reach the Asramam before sunset, a lady devotee by name Lakshamma, who was born in Tiruchuli and was a childhood friend of Bhagavan and who used to talk to him familiarly, was plucking and putting in a basket the jasmine and *tangedu* flowers that had grown luxuriantly on the trees in and around the cremation ground there. Bhagavan noticed it and said smilingly, "Lakshamma, what are you doing?" She said, "I am plucking flowers." "I see. Is that your job? It is all

right but why so many flowers?" asked Bhagavan. "For *pūja*," she said. "Oh! It won't be a *pūja* unless you worship with so many flowers, is that it?" said Bhagavan. "I don't know. These trees have abundance of flowers. So I am plucking them," she said. "I see. Since it will not be nice if there is a luxuriant growth of flowers, you are making them naked. You have seen the beauty of that growth and you do not like others to see it. You have watered them and helped them in their growth, haven't you? So you can take the liberty of plucking all the flowers and making them naked so that no one else can see that beauty. It is only then that you will get the full benefit of your *pūja*, is it?" said Bhagavan.

3rd July 1947

(53) *ABHISHEKAM* (WORSHIP WITH WATER)

A devotee, who has been coming to the Asramam off and on, yesterday, during conversation regarding Bhagavan's stay on the hill, asked him: "While Bhagavan was on the hill, it seems some one did *abhishekam* to Bhagavan with coconut water. Is that a fact?" Laughingly Bhagavan said, "Yes, while I was in Virupaksha Cave, some ladies from the north came. I was sitting on a platform under the tamarind tree with half-closed eyes, without particularly noticing their arrival. I thought they would go away after a while. Suddenly there was a noise of breaking something. I therefore opened my eyes and saw coconut water trickling down my head. One of those

ladies had done that *abhishekam*. What was I to do? I was a Mouna Swami and couldn't talk. I had no towel even to wipe the water off, and so that water dried on my body as it was. Not only that. There used to be lighting of camphor, pouring of water on the head, *thirthās* (sacred waters), *prasādās*, and several such troublesome performances. It used to be quite a job stopping such things."

Similar instances, I myself have seen some four or five years back. In the room where Bhagavan takes his bath, there is a hole through which the water comes out. Below that, a gutter was constructed to drain off the water. At the time of his bathing, some devotees used to gather at that place, sprinkle on their head the water that came out of it, wipe their eyes and even use it for *āchamanīyam* (sipping drops of water for religious purposes). That was going on quietly and unobserved for some time. But in due course people began bringing vessels and buckets to gather that water and there was a regular queue. That naturally resulted in some noise which reached Bhagavan's ears. He enquired and found out the facts. Addressing the attendants, he said, "Oh! Is that the matter? When I heard the noise I thought it was something else. What nonsense! Will you get this stopped or shall I bathe at the tap outside? If that is done, you will be saved the trouble of heating water for me, and there will be no trouble for them either, to watch and wait for that *tirtha*. What do I want? Only two things, a towel and a *koupinam*. I can bathe and then rinse them at the tap and that completes the job. If not the tap, you have the hill streams and the tanks. Why this bother? What do you say?" When Bhagavan thus took them to task, they were afraid and told everything to *Sarvādhikāri* who thereupon put a ban

on any one going to the side of the bath room during the bathing hour.

Another thing happened during those days. Bhagavan used to go to the hill in the hot sun after taking food in the forenoon. On his return, when he came to the platform near the hall, the attendants used to pour water on his feet from the *kamandalu* (wooden bowl) and he used to wash his feet and then go in. Some used to hide somewhere there and, as soon as he went into the hall, they used to collect that water and sprinkle it on their heads. Once an enquiry starts, all faults come out, don't they? Bhagavan appears to have noticed that also. One afternoon he saw through the window an old and longstanding devotee sprinkling this water on his head. Seizing that opportunity, he began saying, "There it is! See that! As I have not been taking any special notice of it, it is going beyond all limits. However long they are here and however often they hear what I say, these ridiculous things do not stop. What is it they are doing? I shall henceforth stop washing my feet, do you understand?" He thus reprimanded them severely. That devotee was stunned, and with shame and grief, went to Bhagavan immediately and begged pardon.

Not only did Bhagavan admonish him like that, but from the next day onwards, Bhagavan refused to wash his feet there even though the attendants pleaded with him to retain the existing custom. As I was then in the own, I did not know about this immediately. Four days later, somebody arranged *bhiksha* in the Asramam and invited me for food. After food, I stayed there. Bhagavan was as usual coming down the hill. As I had some doubts about my *sādhana*, I thought I could ask him leisurely after he returned to

the hall and so, I stood at the western window outside the hall. It is usual for me to do so whenever I wanted to ask and clear my doubts. You know what happened this time? Instead of facing east as usual, Bhagavan turned towards the side where I was standing. I stepped aside and gave way with some misgivings. He looked at me with concealed anger. I trembled with fear. I did not know why he looked at me like that. As he was turning the corner by the window, the attendants tried to give him water to wash his feet. Bhagavan shouted at them, saying, "No". When they said, "You have been in the hot sun," he said, "What of that? If we look to cleanliness, a number of people wait for that water. Enough of this. If you want, you wash your feet," so saying, Bhagavan entered the hall.

I was wondering if I had committed any fault resulting in Bhagavan getting angry and so went away, without trying to clear my doubts. In the evening, I enquired and found out all that had happened. It was only after that, I had some peace of mind.

6th, July 1947

(54) *TĪRTHA-PRASĀDĀS* (HOLY WATER
AND FOOD)

Long back, when there were not many people in the Asramam, one of the attendants of Bhagavan used to wait until Bhagavan had finished eating and then used to have his food on Bhagavan's leaf. Gradually Asramites and old devotees began asking for that leaf and getting it. So long

as rival claims for the leaf did not take a serious turn, Bhagavan did not take much notice of it. A plate also had to be placed before the leaf for washing his hands. As soon as he went away after washing his hands, that water also used to be taken in like *tirtha*. In due course, these two practices of the Asramites went beyond the Asramam precincts and spread to Ramana Nagar also.

One day the mother of a wealthy devotee came there during lunch time and stood by the side of Bhagavan. Seeing her, Bhagavan said, "Why don't you sit down for food?" She did not do so. Bhagavan understood the purpose but kept quiet as if he did not know anything. On the other side, the grand-daughter of another devotee, aged eight, stood with a tumbler in her hand. Noticing her also, Bhagavan said, "Why are you also standing? Sit down and eat food." "No," she said. "Then why have you come? What is that tumbler for?" asked Bhagavan. After all, she was an unsophisticated child, and so, not knowing it to be a secret, said, "Grandmother has sent me to fetch *tirtham*." Bhagavan could not contain his anger any longer and so, said, "I see. That is the thing. This child is waiting for *tirtham* and that lady for the leaf, that is it, isn't it?" When he thus asked with a commanding tone, one of the people near him said, "Yes." "I have been noticing this nonsense for some time now," he said. "They think that Swami sits in the hall with closed eyes and does not notice any of these things. I did not want to interfere in such things all these days, but there does not seem to be any limit to them. *Tirthas* and *prasādās* out of *uchistham* (remains of drunken water and eaten food), and people to take turns for them! Look! Henceforth, I will not wash my hands in the plate, not even

anywhere about this place. I will not leave the leaf here and go. I myself will remove it and throw it away. You understand? All of you join together and do these things. This is the only punishment," so saying and repeating several other charges for a long time, Bhagavan folded his leaf after eating food and then got up with the used leaf in his hand. However much people there begged of him, he did not give them the leaf, but went up the hill and, after turning a corner, threw it away and then washed his hands there. Eventually the Asramites prayed and assured him that they would stop those undesirable practices. He said, "When everyone removes his used leaf and throws it away, why should I leave mine?" Until 1943, after food, everyone used to remove his leaf and throw it away. That practice was changed only after this incident.

After all the Asramites swore that they themselves would remove all the leaves and throw them away along with Bhagavan's leaf, he reluctantly began leaving his leaf there. But even till today he has been washing his hands outside, near the steps to the hall. If anybody requested him to wash his hands in a plate, he would say, "Will you provide all these people with plates? If all the others do not have them, why do I require one?" What reply could we give him?

8th July 1947

(55) *HASTHA MASTHAKA SAMYOGAM*
 (TOUCHING OF THE HEAD WITH THE HAND
 BY WAY OF BLESSING)

“Sister ! From what you have written in the last three or four letters, it is clear that Sri Bhagavan not only declines to allow *pāda pūja* (worship of the feet), *abhisheka* (worship with water) and *uchishta tīrtha prasādas*, but actually condemns them. But then, in *Guru Gita* and other books, it is stated that *Guru pāda pūja*, *padodaka pānam* (taking in of water with which the feet are washed) and the like are approved religious practices. Some elders have accepted such practices from their disciples. What then is the explanation ?” You might expect some people to take this attitude. But remember, Bhagavan, who is in a highly exalted state and who has realised the oneness of the Self with the Universe so as to dispense with the distinction between Guru and *sisya*, does not require these practices and always maintains that they are meant only for those who have not yet given up the belief that the body is identical with Atma, and that it is for the satisfaction of such people that these practices have been laid down by some of the ancients. You may then ask, “If that is so, why does he remain indifferent when some of these acts are done and object to them afterwards ?” When two or three people do it once in a way he may not mind, feeling sorry that they have not yet got over the belief that the body is identical with Atma ; but if it becomes a regular practice, how can he refrain from objecting ? He might object through regret that the *dehātma bhāvanā* (a feeling

that the body is identical with Atma) had not yet left people. In his indifference and in his objections alike there will be many fine shades of thought which is not possible for us to describe exactly.

It may be pointed out, that it has been mentioned in books, that Bhagavan himself gave *yibhuti* and the like to Sivaprakasam Pillai and some other devotees. We have also heard of this from several people. But then, Bhagavan himself has told us several times that when there were not many people around, he used to move with them freely and give them whatever they asked for. Even now, if he is eating anything and we, long-standing devotees are there, he gives a portion of it to us. When he was living on the hill it happened sometimes that there was not enough food for the number of people there, and so he himself used to mix all the available food, make it into small balls of equal size and give one to each of them, eating one himself. It was natural for the devotees to feel that this was *prasādam* to the *sishyās* from the Guru's hand. That is all. I have never heard Bhagavan saying that he was giving such things as *anugraha* (grace extended to the *sishyā* by the Guru) or that he had ever done such a thing before.

Recently a devotee who had heard such reports, asked Bhagavan himself about it : "I hear that Bhagavan gave '*hashta mastaka samyogam*' to a devotee. Is that a fact ?"

"How is that possible ? As I get up from the sofa or converse with people or go about here and there, my hand might have unintentionally touched their heads, and they might have taken it as *hashta diksha* (touching with the hand by way of blessing). In the case of people with whom I am a bit familiar, I might even have patted them. That is all. I have never deliberately done this '*hashta*

mastaka samyogam! I like to move with people freely and in a natural manner. And they might take it as an act of grace from me. Just because of that, will it become *hashta mastaka samyogam*?" said Bhagavan.

About 10 or 15 days back, a sadhu came here and stayed for a few days. Approaching Bhagavan humbly one day, he said: "Swami, I pray that, when you take food, you may be pleased to give me a morsel of food as *prasādam*." "Take all the food you eat as *prasādam* of the Lord. Then it becomes God's *prasādam*. Isn't all that we eat *Bhagavat-prasādam*? Who is it that eats? Where does he come from? If you go to the very root of things and know the truth, you will find that everything is *Bhagavat-prasādam*," said Bhagavan.

10th July 1947

(56) "*VICHĀRAMANIMĀLĀ*"

It seems that a book by name *Vichāra Sāgara Sāra Sangraha* written by Bhagavan in Tamil about 30 years ago, was got printed by Arunachala Mudaliar. As, however, Bhagavan's name was not mentioned therein, it remained unknown. Recently, someone took *Vichāra Sāgaram* in Malayalam from the library and while he was returning it, it came into the hands of Bhagavan.. He then remembered that he had once written *Vichāra Sāgara Sāra Sangraha* and enquired where a printed copy was kept. After some search it was found in a crumpled state. When a devotee was copying it out for reprinting, Bhagavan asked him to include the example of a flag in regard to *vairāgya*. When

that devotee asked what is the significance of that example, Bhagavan said with a smile, "It means the flag of *vairāgya* for a *jñāni* and the flag or *rāga* for an *ajñāni* will be there as if tied before them. One can tell who is a *jñāni* and who is an *ajñāni* by seeing that flag. For an *ajñāni*, even if he gets *vairāgya* on account of mental or physical ailments, it will be temporary only. The flag of *rāga* will come and stand in front of him. The flag of *vairāgya* will never move. What greater sign does a *jñāni* require than that?"

Someone else asked, "What induced Bhagavan to write this book?" "Sadhu Nischaladas wrote *Vichāra Sāgaram* in Hindi," Bhagavan replied. "It is full of arguments. Arunachala Mudaliar brought a Tamil translation of it and said, 'this is very elaborate. Please write a small book summarising the important points in it'. As he was insistent and as it would be useful for *sādhaks*, I wrote it. He immediately published it. That was about thirty years ago." "Why is it that Bhagavan's name was not mentioned therein?" the devotee continued. "I was afraid every one might bring a book and press me to write a summary of it. So I myself forbade it," said Bhagavan. "There may be several similar unknown writings. It would be a good thing if they could be published," I said. "Is that so? Have you no other work to do?" said Bhagavan and assumed *mouna*.

Bhagavan felt that the name of the book was not satisfactory and so changed it recently into *Vichāramanīmālā*. When they were thinking of sending it to the press for publication with Bhagavan's name on it, I felt that it would be better if Bhagavan himself wrote it in Telugu. I was afraid he would not agree, so I said nothing. Mouni (Srinivasa Rao) made Rajagopala Iyer request Bhagavan

to write it in Telugu also, so that both could be published at one time and said to me encouragingly, "Nagamma, why don't you also ask Bhagavan?" I accordingly prayerfully requested Bhagavan. For some time he argued saying, "Am I a Telugu Pandit? Why don't you write it? Why should I?" However, as he is full of kindness, he himself eventually translated it into Telugu in answer to our prayers. It will shortly be published in both languages. It is in prose. Each sentence is like a *sūtra*.

12th July 1947

(57) RESIDENTS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

Aravind Bose, a long-standing Bengali devotee, had one son and one daughter. The son, a stalwart young man, suddenly passed away before he completed his eighteenth year. Bose was very much grieved and to get relief he used to ask Bhagavan questions now and then. Today also, he asked some questions. Even in that question, his grief was evident. Bhagavan, as usual, asked him to enquire into the Self and find out. He was not satisfied. Bhagavan then said, "All right. I will tell you a story from *Vichāra Sāgaram*. Listen." So saying, he began telling us the following story :

"Two youngsters by name Rāma and Krishna, told their respective parents that they would go to foreign countries to prosecute further studies and then earn a lot of money. After some time, one of them died suddenly. The other studied well, earned a lot and was living happily.

Some time later the one that was alive requested a merchant who was going to his native place to tell his father that he was wealthy and happy and that the other who had come with him had passed away. Instead of passing on the information correctly, the merchant told the father of the person that was alive that his son was dead and the father of the person that was dead, that his son had earned a lot of money and was living happily. The parents of the person that was actually dead, were happy in the thought that their son would come back after some time while the parents of the person whose son was alive but was reported to be dead, were in great grief. In fact, neither of them saw their son but they were experiencing happiness or grief according to the reports they received. That is all. It is only when they go to that country that they will know the truth. We too are similarly situated. We believe all sorts of things that the mind tells us and get deluded into thinking that what exists does not exist and that what does not exist exists. If we do not believe the mind but enter the heart and see the son that is inside, there is no need to see the children outside."

About a year back, a Rani from Bombay Presidency came here. She was a good lady and a mother of several children. Her husband was staying in foreign countries. However courageous she might be, would she not feel his absence? We all thought she came here hoping to get peace of mind by Bhagavan's *darshan*. Accordingly, you know what happened? Having heard that Muruganar had written several songs and verses in Tamil about Bhagavan, she requested Bhagavan through a friend, to get some of the good ones translated into English.

Though Bhagavan said in an indifferent manner, "What

do I know? Better ask Muruganar himself," by the time I went there at 2-30 p.m. he was turning over the pages of the book, leaving book-marks here and there and showing them to Sundaresa Iyer. I sat down, surprised at that kindness. Looking at me, Bhagavan said, "That Rani requested me to select some songs from Muruganar's book and get them translated into English. In his book *Sannidhi Murai* there is a portion called '*Bringasandesam*'. I put some marks in that portion. The *bhāva* is that of a *nāyikā* (heroine) and of a *nāyaka* (hero). The mind is *nāyikā*. Ramana is *nāyaka*. The bee (the unwavering *buddhi*) is the maid. The gist of the songs marked is: the heroine says to her maid, 'My Ramana has disappeared. Search and bring him'. The maid says, 'Oh, mistress! When your Ramana is in your own self, where can I search for him? If at any time, the food given is hot, you say, 'Oh! my Ramana, my lord, is in my heart; will he not get burnt with this heat? Now where do you want me to search? When your Lord is within yourself, where can I search for him? Give up this delusion. Join the Lord that is within yourself and be peaceful'. This is the gist of those songs. I marked them as they may be of use to her. Poor lady! There is no knowing where her husband is. The mind is troubled. So, we shall have to tell her to adapt her mental attitude. I felt that these verses would be appropriate."

Meanwhile, the Rani came. Lokamma was made to sing those songs and Sundaresa Iyer to give the meaning in English. She was satisfied. We thought that Bhagavan, by this opportunity, taught us that one should not grieve over people residing in foreign countries but should turn the mind inward so that the *ātma swarūpa* (the Lord in the self) will be close to us at all times.

18th July 1947

(58) *AKSHAYALOKAM*
(THE ETERNAL WORLD)

The day before yesterday a Tamil young man approached Bhagavan in the afternoon and said : "Swami, when I lay down doing *dhyāna* today, I fell asleep. Someone I can't say who, appeared to me in my sleep. Seeing me, he said in a firm tone, 'God has come down as an *avatār* of Kaliki with fourteen heads. He is being brought up somewhere'. I have come here thinking that Bhagavan will be able to tell me where that Kalki *avatār* now is."

"I see. Why did you not ask the person himself who appeared in your dream about it? You should have asked him at the time. What is lost even now? Go on doing *dhyāna* until he comes back and tells you," said Bhagavan. Unable to understand the significance of that, the young man said, "Will he really come back to me and give me the required information if I go on doing *dhyāna*?" "You may or may not be informed where that *avatāra purusha* is. If only you do not give up *dhyāna* but do it continuously you will realise the Truth. Then there will be no room for any doubts," said Bhagavan.

Taking advantage of this conversation, another person asked, "It is said that God lives in an eternal world. Is this true?" Bhagavan replied, "If we are in a temporary world, He may be in an eternal world. Are we in a temporary world? If this is true, that also is true. If we are not real, where is the world and where is time?"

In the meanwhile, a young boy, four years old, entered the hall with a toy motor car. Seeing that, Bhagavan said,

"See. Instead of the car carrying us, we are carrying the car. That is right," and laughed. Later, looking at us all, he said, "Look, this also can be taken as an example. We say, 'we sat in the motor car', 'the motor car is carrying us', 'we have come in the car', 'the car has brought us here'. Will the car which is inanimate, move without our driving it? No. Who drives? We. So also this world. Where is the world without our being in it? There must be some one to see the beauty of this world, and understand it. Who is the seer? He. He is everywhere. Then what is transient and what is permanent? If one knows the truth through self-enquiry there will be no problems." Bhagavan has already written the same thing like a *sutra* in verse No. 19 in his *Sad Vidya* (*Unnadhi Nalubadhi*).

20th July 1947

(59) *JNĀNADRISHTI*
(SUPERNATURAL VISION)

Bhagavan used to write *slokās*, *padyās* and prose on small bits of paper, whenever it occurred to him or whenever anyone requested him to write. Quite a number of them have been lost but whatever were available, we gathered and kept them carefully. I wanted to stitch a small book of white paper and paste them all in. I mentioned this to Bhagavan now and then but he always said, "Why bother?"

Yesterday afternoon, I was bent upon pasting them and so when I requested him, he said, "Why? If all of

them are in one place, someone or other will take it away finding that it contains all Swami's writings. We can't say anything. Swami is the common property of all. It is better to leave them separate." I then understood the real reason why Bhagavan was unwilling and so gave up my attempt.

In the meanwhile, a fussy young man who had come, asked, "Swami, it seems a *jnani* has *jnānadrishṭi* (supernatural vision) besides *bāhyadrishṭi* (external vision). Will you please do me the favour of giving me that *jnānadrishṭi*? Or will you tell me where there is a person who could give me it?" Bhagavan replied, "That *jnānadrishṭi* must be acquired by one's own effort and is not something that anybody can give." That devotee said, "It is said that the Guru himself can give it if he so pleases." Bhagavan replied, "The Guru can only say 'if you follow this path, you will gain *jnānadrishṭi*'. But who follows it? A Guru who is a *jnāni* is only a guide but the walking (i.e. the *sādhana*) must be done by the *śiṣhyās* themselves." The young man felt disappointed and went away.

A little later, a devotee's child of about 5 or 6 years of age, residing in Ramana Nagar, brought two raw fruit from their garden and gave them to Bhagavan. She used to bring sweets and fruit now and then and give them to Bhagavan. On all such occasions, Bhagavan used to say, "Why all this?" But he ate them all the same. Yesterday, he gave them back without eating and said, "Take this fruit home, cut it into small bits and give them to all the others saying, 'This is to Bhagavan, this is to Bhagavan' and you also eat some. Bhagavan is within everybody. Why do you bring them everyday? I told you not to. Give them to everybody there. Bhagavan is within everybody. Please go." That girl went away disappointed.

Looking at me, Bhagavan said, "Children take great pleasure in such things. If they say they will give Swami something they know they will also get something out of it. When I was on the hill, little boys and girls used to come to me whenever they had a holiday. They used to ask their parents for money and bring with them packets of sweets, biscuits and the like. I used to sit along with them and get my share of all of them."

"So you used to enjoy the feast like Bala Gopala," I said. "If they say they will take something for Swami, they know they will get something for themselves. It is all right if that is done once in a way. But why every day? If all of them eat, isn't it equivalent to my eating?" said Bhagavan. I was happy and pleased at Bhagavan so clearly illustrating to us how he is in everybody.

You know what happened a week or ten days ago! In the morning at breakfast, someone served more oranges to Bhagavan than to the others. Seeing that, Bhagavan completely stopped taking oranges. Four or five days back, when devotees appealed to him to resume taking oranges, Bhagavan said, "Is it not enough if you all eat?" The devotees said, "Isn't it painful for us to eat when Bhagavan doesn't? That is why we are appealing to you to excuse us." Bhagavan said, "What is there to excuse? I don't like them so much." When they said, "They are good for Bhagavan's health," he replied, saying, "Look, there are about a hundred people taking breakfast. I am eating through so many mouths. Isn't that enough? Should it be through this mouth only?"

That is *jñānadrishti*. Who can give it to others?

19th July 1947

(60) HEARING, MEDITATION AND THE LIKE

Yesterday, two pandits came from Kumbakonam. This morning at 9 o'clock, they approached Bhagavan and said, "Swami, we take leave of you. We pray that you may be pleased to bless us that our mind may merge or dissolve itself in *shānti*." Bhagavan nodded his head as usual. After they had left, he said, looking at Ramachandra Iyer, "*Shānthi* is the original state. If what comes from outside is rejected what remains is peace. What then is there to dissolve or merge? Only that which comes from outside has to be thrown out. If people whose minds are mature are simply told that the *svarūpa* itself is *shānthi*, they get *jñāna*. It is only for immature minds that *sravana* and *manana* are prescribed but for mature minds there is no need of them. If people at a distance enquire how to go to Ramana Maharshi, we have to tell them to get into such and such a train or take such and such a path, but if they come to Tiruvannamalai, reach Ramanasramam and step into the hall, it is enough if only they are told, here is that person. There is no need for them to move any further."

"*Sravana* and *manana* mean only those of Vedanta and Guru, don't they?" said some one. "Yes," Bhagavan replied, "But one thing. Not only are there outward *sravana* and *manana* but there are also inward *sravana* and *manana*. They must occur to a person as a result of the maturity of his mind. Those that are liable to do that *aantara sravana* (hearing inwardly) do not have any doubts."

Whenever any one asked what those *aantara sravanas* are, he used to say, "*Aantara sravana* means the knowledge of that *Ātma* which is in the cave of the heart always illuminated with the feeling '*aham, aham*' ('I, I'), and to get that feeling to be in one's heart is *manana* and to remain in one's self is *nididhyāsa*."

In this connection, it is worth while remembering the *sloka* written by Bhagavan bearing on this subject. In that *sloka* mention is made not only to *Ātma sphurana* but also how to secure it. Securing means only remaining in one's own self.

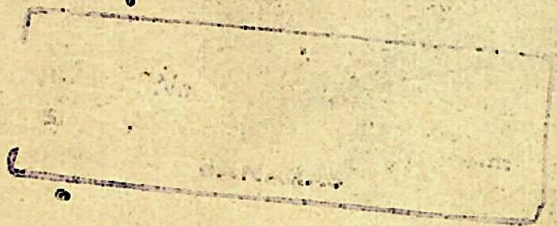
हृदयकुहरमध्ये केवलं ब्रह्मात्मम् ।

ह्यहमहमिति साक्षादात्मरूपेण भाति ।

हृदि विश मनसा खम् चिन्वता मज्जता वा ।

पवनचलन रोधादात्मनिष्ठो भव त्वम् ॥

"Brahman is glowing lustrously in the middle of the cave of the Heart in the shape of the Self, always proclaiming 'I am, I am'. Become an *Ātmanishta*, a Self-realised person, either by making the mind absorbed in the search of the Self or by making the mind drown itself through control of the breath."



RECEIVED